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# A Step into The Past

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Book 03

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Huang Yi

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## Chapter 1

### Starting the journey

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Before they left the palace, the warriors and carriages gathered in the large field. The King of Zhao personally made prayers to Heaven and ancestors in a ceremony, praying for a safe journey, but of course Xiang Shaolong knows that what he's praying for is that they can steal the 'Secret Manual of Lu Gong', and is not at all concerned about their life or death. Of course nothing has to be said about his daughter Zhao Qian's happiness.

The King of Zhao barely managed to transfer a few more men to Xiang Shaolong so that his troops now total 500. In addition to Prince Shaoyuan's 200 warriors, a total of 700 light cavalry now escort Lady Ya, Third Princess Zhao Xian, Lady Pingyuan and a group of concubines and maids who are traveling in 27 carriages, with 40 carts carrying provisions and miscellaneous items. They left with much fanfare out of Zhao's capital Handan via the southern gate, following the official roads towards their first stop Zixian.

This is still within the boundaries of Zhao, so they need not worry about safety. The great general Li Mu also sent 500 riders to escort them to the outskirts of city walls 200li away from Zixian city. Therefore Xiang Shaolong was still relaxed, if he has to worry, he'll do it after they pass the city walls and on their way to Wei's border.

What surprised him was Lady Ya's 8 maids, Xiaozhao, Xiaoyu and the rest were all dressed in armor and riding majestically on their horses, their

reflexes swift and nimble.

And then he realized, in this warring states era, it's natural that all males will learn martial arts, so it's no exception for fit women as well.

He is not an expert at all in the way the troops are formed in this era, so while there's nothing to do during the journey, he started asked Cheng Xu.

Cheng Xu replied honestly, "A war is a matter of life and death, as long as there's an ounce of strength, that ounce of strength will be used to the end. In the battle of Changping, the state of Qin conscripted 15 year old boys into the army for battle. When the King of Yan attacked us the last time, his Majesty even conscripted under aged boys into the army. Luckily we could defeat Yan, if not... ai!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that Cheng Xu is Lady Ya's man, so he was a lot less guarded when talking to him. So he conveniently asked about how the army is formed.

Cheng Xu replied without hiding anything, "What the term 3 armies mean generally refers to strong men, strong women and old and weak armies. The army of strong men is the main force in battle, strong women are usually in charge of engineering, manual labor and any work that requires assistant while old and weak army are the back ups and in charge of miscellaneous work like being in charge of rations."

Xiang Shaolong was enlightened. When he watched movies in the past, all those battle scenes were magnificent and epic, filled with the romanticism of

heroism. So it turns out that the truth is another matter altogether, that even women, children, the weak and old were all pushed to the battlefield to suffer and lose their lives.

Cheng Xu lowered his voice, “Although we have less men this time, but they’re all elite warriors, so obviously his Majesty is very concerned with this trip, which is very rare.”

Xiang Shaolong turned his head back for a look and saw Prince Shaoyuan’s 10 carriages and 200 warriors at the very end of the procession. He can’t help but sigh. He thought that if anything were to happen, Prince Shaoyuan will certainly not listen to his instructions. Just this ‘internal troublemaker’ is enough to give him a headache.

The 2 beauties Zhao Qian and Zhao Ya’s carriages all had their curtains lowered, and he can’t see what’s happening inside. He wondered if they’re secretly looking at him?

Once he thought of that, he moved his horse next to Lady Ya’s carriage.

As expected Lady Ya immediately rolled up her curtains, revealing her pretty face and aside with a coquettish smile, “Does Imperial Protector want to come up for a seat?”

Xiang Shaolong said with a bitter smile, “Your subject is on a mission, how can I be so rude?”

Xiaozhao and the rest of the maids who were behind the carriage all covered

their mouths and sniggered.

The 4 highly skilled and loyal warriors Lady Ya mentioned were split into 2 groups and protecting her on both sides, and on seeing Xiang Shaolong, all acknowledged him respectfully.

Lady Ya said, “The 4 of them are all orphans, so they follow my family name and are named Zhao Da, Zhao Er, Zhao Wu and Zhao Qi, if there’s anything you can just give them orders.”

Xiang Shaolong saw that the oldest among them, Zhao Da, is only a few years older than him, while Zhao Qi is about 16 years old at the most. But they all look like strong and muscular youths with some skills, so he said with a smile, “My instructions to them would be to stay by Third Princess and your side at all times, that is enough.” And secretly thought to himself that the state of Zhao may be the country with the most orphans and widows in this time.

Zhao Da and the rest all made their promise.

That day they traveled for more than 30li, luckily the scenery was picturesque along the way so Xiang Shaolong treated it as an outing, chatting with Lady Ya and the maids while he’s free so he don’t find it lonesome at all.

Zhao Qian and her 2 personal maids were hiding in their carriage and did not reveal themselves.

Although Xiang Shaolong very much wanted to see her, he must control this impulse. No matter what she is of an esteemed status now and cannot talk

with men so easily. Besides he knows that she's going to marry to the state of Wei, so it's better not to be tangled with her.

At dusk, the entourage pitched tents to rest. There were more than 200 tents set up on the field next to a small stream.

In Xiang Shaolong's Commander's tent, Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu and the assistant commander Li Mu sent, Ding Shou, as well as 2 other military leaders Zi Ji and Ren Zhen. The 5 of them sat around a table and enjoyed dinner.

For warriors like them, the topics talked about are naturally about war and strategy. Right now the very experienced general Ding Shou was talking about the changes in war and the situation like an expert.

Ding Shou said, "The wars last time were a lot simpler, wining or losing depends only on one direct clash, and the results will be known in just a few days. Even if it's a siege testing stamina, it will last only 20 to 30 days. King Chu Zhuang's besiegement of Song lasted 9 months, and that is an extremely rare example. Not like the wars now, each can last 3 to 5 years, the suffering endured can be endlessly related."

Xiang Shaolong was curious and asked, "Why is the change so drastic?"

Cheng Xu interrupted, "Your honor has just recently joined the army, naturally you do not know the circumstances behind it. This can be explained several ways. Firstly, the population has increased thus the army has become stronger as well. The larger states in the past like Jin and Chu, the army is

only about 4000 strong, they can't even find 10,000 people. But now if you include the female soldiers, the old and weak, you can have an army of hundred thousands. Secondly is the defense of a country..."

The commander Zi Ji added, "Imperial Protector Cheng is correct, in the past the defense of a country only centers around its capital, it's only later that they slowly build up the nearby stockades into cities. But the rest of the place, the enemy forces can still pass through at will, it's like stateless land."

Ren Zhen chipped in, "Now it's a different thing altogether, the different states are now erecting their own city walls and castles. If you want to conquer another state, you'll have to attack the cities one by one, and there are other problems as well. So once a war is mentioned, everyone is troubled."

Cheng Xu continued, "The aims of battles in the past were to obtain goods and force the enemy to concede. But now the main task is to occupy the land and kill the enemy. The losers will perish with the thought of hatred and the loss of a country. Therefore everyone will fight the enemy to the death. Wars are really getting more and more difficult and violent."

Ding Shou sighed, "Also the large scale skirmishes for foot soldiers and cavalry and besiegement attacks have replaced the old strategy of using carriages as the main force of attack, which was neater and looks nicer as well. The art of war is becoming more complicated, and as the saying goes, a soldier will turn to every trick available, so now there's ambushes, luring the enemies, surrounding them, attacking them in the middle, waiting games etc. In order to defeat the enemy and ensure a victory, every possible idea has



been used.”

Cheng Xu said with a laugh, “In those days both sides will first choose a time and location and make an appointment. On the day of battle they will both use war carriages as the main force, foot soldiers as support troops and position themselves nicely before beating the drums to signal an attack. Everything is simple and quick. But now there’s no such thing. It’s best if your enemy doesn’t even know that you’re right outside their gates so that they will be caught unawares.” He continued with a big sigh, “Fighting for territory and killing people in the fields, fighting for cities and killing people in the cities.”

Ding Shou sighed as well, “In the past we’d just temporarily conscripted the farmers to be soldiers, but now warfare is getting more and more professional, not only are there full time soldiers, even the training is stricter as well.”

Xiang Shaolong could feel their fear and how fed up they are with wars. He thought to himself that if soldiers like them feel this way, all the more Lady Ya and Master Wu would feel as such too. Especially after the battle of Changping, the state of Zhao was in a dangerous position and everyone only looked out for themselves. It seems that there really is not much time left for Zhao, so how can he escape with all the ladies to a safe place in time so that they will not end up casualties of the impending doom.

Just as he was deep in thought, noises can be heard from outside the tent.

Xiang Shaolong and the rest were surprised and they all rushed out.

They saw Lady Ya's camp area were full of soldiers, and sounds of argument could be heard.

A soldier rushed over at this time and huffed, "Something bad happened, Prince Shaoyuan's man Xu Hai killed someone."

Xiang Shaolong and Cheng Wei exchanged a glance, and they could all tell it's a way Prince Shaoyuan is belittling them.

The one killed is Lady Ya's family warrior Zhao Er.

It turned out that while Xiang Shaolong and the rest were in the tent dining and chatting, Prince Shaoyuan took the opportunity to lead the 3 of his most formidable family warriors Xu Hai, Pu Bu and Liu Chao as well as 10 odd fighters to barge their way into Lady Ya's private tent. Obviously he's trying to resume their old relationship and at the same time cause Xiang Shaolong a loss of face.

The guards naturally dared not stop him, until they reached the restricted area of Lady Ya's private camp, separated by a curtain, and which is where Zhao Da and the rest stopped them. Before they had a chance to inform Lady Ya of the new arrivals, Prince Shaoyuan who was deliberately looking for trouble has already ordered his men to attack the 4 of them. They were caught unawares and were greatly outnumbered, the 4 of them were all injured. Zhao Er's throat was slashed by Xu Hai and died on the spot.

The guards behind the curtain felt that something was wrong and they all charged out and surrounded Prince Shaoyuan and his men, thus blocking

their way.

Prince Shaoyuan's family warriors heard about the news and were rushing to give aid but the imperial soldiers under Xiang Shaolong's command stopped them. For a moment everyone was in a deadlock.

By the time Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu, Ding Shou and the rest rushed over, Lady Ya was surrounded by Xiaozhao and the rest of the maids, the blood stained Zhao Da, Zhao Wu and Zhao Qi. Her pretty face was pale with fury and she was staring at Prince Shaoyuan with hatred.

But Prince Shaoyuan and his men stood around with a look that said there's nothing anyone can do to them. When he saw Xiang Shaolong arriving, he ignored him and spoke to Ding Shou instead, "What is all this, what's the big deal about me killing a rude person who offended someone of a higher rank than him. Assistant Commander Ding, you'd better chase all these people away."

Ding Shou was furious but he understood the way of the political world and he did not try to undertake the problem. He said somberly, "Imperial Protector Xiang is in charge of everything here, I am only in charge of everyone's safety along the journey."

Lady Ya moved next to Xiang Shaolong and said quietly, "Kill Xu Hai for me, I'll bear all consequences." Zhao Da and the rest were close like brothers with Zhao Er, they knelt down and said, "Would Imperial Protector Xiang please decide for us."

Prince Shaoyuan sniggered coldly and crossed his arms in front of his chest, looking insolently at Xiang Shaolong, deliberately making him look bad.

By now the curtain has been pushed to the ground, the imperial soldiers surrounding them saw how disrespectful Prince Shaoyuan was towards Xiang Shaolong and they felt the same belittlement from him as well. They all roared, the situation was tense and anything could have triggered it off.

Xiang Shaolong raised his hand to signal everyone to be quiet. His heart filled with old hatred and new enmity, he really felt like killing Prince Shaoyuan right now but of course he cannot do that.

Even if he ignores the fact that he's supposed to protect Prince Shaoyuan until the state of Wei, he has to consider that the second in command in Wei is Prince Shaoyuan's uncle, so how can he ever get to Wei if he kills him. Prince Shaoyuan is certain of this point that's why he deliberately tried to belittle Xiang Shaolong on the very first day of their journey.

But if he were to let this past and swallow the insult, no one will ever respect him in future.

This is an era where only heroes and the strong are respected. Maybe even Lady Ya would change her opinion of him.

Everyone's eyes were centered on him.

Xiang Shaolong's gaze landed on Zhao Er's body, which has been moved to the side and coldly uttered, "Xu Hai!"

The tall, thin and sturdy Xu Hai who looks fierce and icy was about to respond when Prince Shaoyuan stopped him, “I gave the orders, if you want you can come after me!”

Xiang Shaolong’s eyes were piercing as he looking as Prince Shaoyuan and said, “If Xu Hai can block 3 of my sword attacks without dying, then this thing shall come to an end!”

Everyone turned quiet.

Some even thought that Xiang Shaolong is just trying to do a slip shod job.

Although Xiang Shaolong’s swordplay is excellent, but to kill an expert like Xu Hai within 3 strokes, is something unimaginable.

Naturally Prince Shaoyuan does not believe that 3 sword attacks would be able to kill Xu Hai and he was secretly ecstatic, thinking that if his 3 attacks came to naught, his reputation will be in tatters. However, his expression remained unperturbed and said, “If Imperial Protector is injured by Xu Hai, then you cannot blame anyone.”

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed loud and long and with a ‘clang’, drew the precious Rainbow Sword which Zhao Mu gave him, pointed it at Xu Hai and said, “Come!”

Men from both sides retreated to form an empty area.

Xu Hai sniggered and pulled out his sword as well.

He has seen Xiang Shaolong and Lian Jin's duel in the palace and is aware of his swordplay. He thought to himself, did he think that he couldn't even block 3 sword attacks? He made up his mind to be on the defensive and to move quickly and constantly so that there's no way Xiang Shaolong can execute his skills.

Cheng Xu, Ding Shou, Lady Ya and the rest all thought that Xiang Shaolong is using this as a chance to back down. They secretly sighed, thinking that it's the best choice out of the worst.

Xiang Shaolong took a deep breath, supported the Rainbow Sword on his shoulder and walked towards Xu Hai.

Xu Hai's arm extended, his long sword held horizontally in front of his chest, pointing from afar at Xiang Shaolong's throat, trying his best not to give Xiang Shaolong a chance to get close to him. His strategy is appropriate.

The audience on both sides all seems to foresee the outcome of the duel, where Xiang Shaolong will retreat empty-handed.

At this time Xiang Shaolong advanced to the area about 2 steps away from the tip of Xu Hai's sword. However, he seemed to step on something and slipped a little. He lost his balance and leaned to the side.

Lady Ya and the other women were all concerned about Xiang Shaolong and they screamed in alarm.

Prince Shaoyuan and his men were ecstatic, and they all cheered for Xu Hai.

Xu Hai is an expert in swordplay, so how can he let go of this one in a million chance. He roared and rushed forward, his long sword aiming towards Xiang Shaolong fast as lightning.

Who would have expected that the swordplay Xiang Shaolong is using now was what they had discussed earlier, 'a soldier will resort to all tricks'. Because under normal circumstances, he would not be able to kill a professional swordsman like Xu Hai even with 10 attacks, so the only way is to lure him to strike so that he'll have an advantage.

Just as the sword was about to reach his chest, he quickly steadied himself and at the same time using his amazing waist strength to bend over backwards, his body almost bent at a 90-degree angle like a bow.

The long sword slid over above him.

Never in his dreams would Xu Hai imagine his opponent would execute such a weird move. His sword struck air and because he used too much strength in the attack, he was still moving forward with the force. Just as he was about to wave his sword and slash downwards, Xiang Shaolong has already given a kick to his nether region.

Xu Hai screamed from the pain, the long sword flying out of his hands while his body staggered back in a fall.

Xiang Shaolong's waist straightened again, the Rainbow Sword which was perched on his shoulder morphed into a flash of light and sliced past Xu Hai's throat.

“Peng!”

By the time Xu Hai collapsed onto the ground, he has already become a lifeless corpse.

Everyone was silent in that moment followed by thunderous cheers from Xiang Shaolong’s side.

The faces on the men on Prince Shaoyuan’s side all turned ashen, their bravado gone.

Xiang Shaolong looked at Prince Shaoyuan icily and said nonchalantly, “Prince Shaoyuan is of an esteemed status and we dare not offend you, but if your servants comment any wrongdoing, don’t blame me for being severe.”

Prince Shaolong stared at him with hatred, his lips trembling but no words came out. He stamped his feet furiously, turned around and left.

Xiang Shaolong called out, “Hold on! Is Master going to leave your servant’s body out in the wilderness?”

Prince Shaoyuan was embarrassed and furious and after ordering his men to carry Xu Hai up, left in a huff.

The imperial soldiers broke out in thunderous cheers, even Cheng Xu and the rest had an expression of awe and respect, thinking that Xiang Shaolong handled this matter beautifully and there’s no way Prince Shaoyuan can raise his head over this.



After Prince Shaoyuan left, Xiang Shaolong felt something was amiss and after giving some instructions, he returned to his commander's tent. He ordered men to stand guard outside, to stop all visitors and laid out the metal instruments Guo Zhong made for him on the ground.

These instruments gleamed, the workmanship exquisite, which greatly impressed Xiang Shaolong. He did not expect that in this warring states period, the standard of metal works would be of such high quality.

The first thing he has to assemble is a metal hook that can be used to climb over walls. That is one of his must have treasures while he was in the special task force. They used a projectile to launch the long hook over the walls or any place that can support the weight, before attaching the rope to the hook around their waist. In that way they can climb up or slide down walls freely.

They used steel ropes in the special task force but now he can only use soft ropes as replacement.

Even though the contraption is simple and Xiang Shaolong has always been interested and familiar with such gadgets, he still had to work late into the night before he got most things done.

He was just looking at his handiwork with satisfaction when he could hear Lady Ya's unhappy voice outside the tent, "Who has the audacity to stop me!"

Xiang Shaolong wanted to keep his things but there wasn't enough time. Lady Ya has rushed in and on seeing the weird things on the floor, she asked

in astonishment, “Shaolong! What are you doing?”

Xiang Shaolong smiled embarrassingly and kept the 2 separate hooks back into the chests and said with a bitter smile, “You don’t have to obey me anymore?”

Lady Ya immediately softened and went into his arms, saying sadly, “I sent Xiaozhao over many times to look for you but was stopped by the guards. I thought you were unhappy with me over Prince Shaoyuan’s matter and I was in a panic, so I came to look for you. How would I dare to disobey you!” She can’t help but ask, “What are those things?”

Xiang Shaolong said condescendingly, “Just some toys, but sometimes they have unexpected uses.”

Lady Ya’s slender hands reached out and took a ring of long and thin metal pieces, some curved and some with a small fork at the other end. She thought about it and asked, “Is this used to open locks?”

Xiang Shaolong knows that he can’t hide this from an expert like her and nodded his head helplessly.

Lady Ya turned her body around, a look of shock flashed past her pretty eyes. She looked at him for a while before saying, “I’m beginning to feel more and more that you are unfathomable. Just now you tricked and killed Xu Hai and avenged Zhao Er and at the same time helped me vent my anger. Ya’er is really grateful to you and am willing to do anything for you.”

Xiang Shaolong saw how obliging she looks and gave her a long kiss as a reward before whispering in her ear, "Promise me! Don't tell anyone what you saw, all right?"

Lady Ya was dizzy from his kiss and nodded her head blissfully, her pretty eyes half closed and said coyly, "Xiang Lang's words are my most important orders. Since I know you do not wish me to ask about such matters, Ya'er will never ask you again in future."

Xiang Shaolong was assured by her kind understanding and took the opportunity to ask her to find someone to help him sew something to be tied around the waist so that he can keep those thousand odd flying needles. To be able to do something for her beloved, naturally Lady Ya agreed happily.

That night they enjoyed themselves amongst indescribable warmth and love.

They continued on the journey early the next morning.

Prince Shaoyuan's side has quiet down and staying right at the back to show that they're a separate group but they did not do anything new to antagonize the others.

The sense of unease Xiang Shaolong felt became even stronger.

For a spoiled brat like Prince Shaoyuan, he's definitely not one to swallow an insult. Now that he seems to be controlling his temper, it must be because there are traps to deal with him once they enter Wei.

Third Princess Zhao Qian stays in her carriage all day long with the curtains lowered. Even when she left the carriage, a veil covers her face and she'd hide immediately in her tent, not taking even a step out, which totally irked Xiang Shaolong.

Traveling in the day and resting at night, by the 4th day they finally reached the stockade nearest to Zhao's border, District Ci. The general guarding the city, Wa Che was extremely respectful to this wedding entourage and hosted a feast in the General's Manor for them. Zhao Qian and Lady Ya are royalty, so naturally they did not attend the feast while Lady Pingyuan and her son excused themselves. Luckily this Wa Che is a humorous person full of anecdotes, so the guests and the host all enjoyed themselves.

After the feast Wa Che took Xiang Shaolong to tour the border of the state of Zhao, the lolling hills surrounding the endless city walls.

Standing on the city walls, Xiang Shaolong remembered that in future Emperor Qin will join the walls of the various states and become one of the world's 10 miracles, the Great Wall of China, and allow China to be able to unify all the states for a long time. He can't help but feel a string of emotions well up inside.

These city walls were thick and high, the moat in front of the city deep and wide. It's indeed the best way to defend against an enemy in those times. In the distance a huge river surrounds them, the rushing torrents extremely breathtaking.

Wa Che pointed to an empty plains outside the city walls and said with a

smile, “That would be Great Zhao’s ugliest place, but it’s man-made. Every once in a while, we’ll have to chop down all the trees outside the city, not leaving even a stone. Anything that can be moved will be moved into the city, not allowing enemies to find anything useful to attack the city with.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this is what they call fortifying the walls and clearing the wilderness. Looking at the watchtowers that was built after every hundred feet or so, he sighed with compliment, “With such defenses, who’d be afraid of the enemy attacking?”

Wa Che pointed at the huge river in the distance and said, “Our city walls which spans a few hundred li also depends on the natural defenses like the possibility of floods and the layout of the land to defend ourselves mainly against Wei and Qin.”

Xiang Shaolong agreed, “It is of utmost importance that the border city is situated at a dangerous and important location. Our city walls are backed against mountains and that in itself is a location that is easy to defend but difficult to attack.”

The long city walls are like the strong arms of a giant, hugging Zhao tightly and safely in his arms.

Wa Che said proudly, “In order to deal with the enemy’s hundred and one weird methods of attacking a city, for example piling soil to raise the height, cloud ladders, digging tunnels, attacking with water, lining up along the walls like ants, or even using ballista, nest vehicles etc to attack the city walls and we had to make repairs to the walls on many occasions. Now I’m not trying

to boast, but even with the vicious Qin army and us not having any reinforcements, we can still block them for quite a few months.

He then took him to look at the various weapons for defense like cross bows, halberds, spears, axes, long mallets, long sickles, long axes, stone ramparts etc. As well as various carriages used to ferry soil or people, which is a real eye opener for Xiang Shaolong.

There's a huge amount of water and sand on top of the walls as well as containers like water jars, wooden and tiled jars. There are even stoves and cauldrons. All these are used to defend against the enemy using fire to attack them, or used to attack enemies who are climbing up the walls.

Xiang Shaolong stored all these information in his memory, thinking to himself that there may come a day where he'll need to use such prehistoric tools to attack a city. At least he won't be at a loss then.

Lastly Wa Che said, "The key points in defending a city, besides having all the defenses up, is to have enough rations and fuel, and the most important is to have sturdy soldiers who stand their posts inside, as well as reinforcements outside. As the saying goes, if there's no army worth saving, then there's no city worth defending."

Xiang Shaolong lowered his head and listened to the lesson, but when he thought of how few men are left in Zhao, he can't help but feel anguished! He really feels like dragging the conniving Zhao Mu here and let him have a taste of facing the enemy with the possibility of perishing under the city walls so that he will never dare to hide safely Handan plotting how to get rid of

loyal officials all day long.

Only at dusk did Xiang Shaolong return in high spirits.

He returned to the huge military mansion where they are staying when Xiang Shaolong suddenly had an idea. He used the excuse of paying his respects to Lady Pingyuan and went to the east wing to visit this lady whose power extends into the two states Wei and Zhao.

Coincidentally Prince Shaoyuan is not around and after the servants conveyed his presence, Lady Pingyuan received him in the main hall of the east chamber.

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong met Lady Pingyuan, and saw that she was graceful and beautiful. Because she took good care of herself, she looked a lot younger than she really is and from afar, she looks like she is in her 30s. Only on a closer look can one see the fine wrinkles below her eyes, but these did not spoil her beauty.

Her hair was combed into a high bun, slanted to the side, which seems to tremble falteringly, making her look even more womanly.

She's wearing an embroidered silk skirt, silk shoes sewn with flower patterns, the hairpieces on her head inlaid with turtle shells, with pearl earrings. She looked very captivating and attractive.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect that after having such a grown up and wicked 'kid', she can still maintain such regality. He was secretly surprised and after

paying his respects, he took a seat below.

Lady Pingyuan, with 4 maids standing erect behind her, was scrutinizing Xiang Shaolong closely but her expression remained cold. There was not a trace of happiness at all, making the atmosphere extremely awkward.

Xiang Shaolong started by saying, “Lady must have had a hard journey, if there’s anything that I have not done well, please do not hesitate to reprimand me.”

Lady Pingyuan looked at him calmly and said, “Who’d dare to blame sir?”

Xiang Shaolong knows that because he has offended her son, she is keeping herself aloof and was about to find an excuse to leave when Lady Pingyuan dismissed her maids and said seriously, “A good man is one who understands the time and situation, and I wonder if Imperial Protector Xiang is one who understands the time and situation?”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that the show is about to start, and said respectfully, “Would Lady please enlighten Shaolong.”

Lady Pingyuan said icily, “If you can’t even comprehend the situation you are in, I do not wish to waste my time talking to you.”

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought her formidable and said, “A good bird will choose a tree to nest in, but if there are rotten trees everywhere, then won’t it have no nest to rest itself even if it has lofty aspirations of flying high up into the sky?”



It must be known that what the two of them are discussing is akin to betraying Zhao, so Xiang Shaolong deliberately used metaphors so that Lady Pingyuan will not be able to use this to trap him.

Firstly he doesn't really think that it's a great deal to betray Zhao, and secondly, if he can get into the good books of this woman, maybe the trip to Wei will be a lot more easier. Or else if she were to say something about him to Prince Xinling, he'll be in big trouble.

Lady Pingyuan seems very impressed with what he said and a trace of a smile could be seen from the corners of her mouth and she said nonchalantly, "The strongest now is Qin. But the Qins are barbaric and extremely discriminatory against other races. Even with Shang Yang's many meritorious reforms in Qin, his entire family was still executed, so for a good bird to choose a tree, there are many other factors to consider as well."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly surprised at her opinions, and for a moment couldn't decide if she is trying to acquire him so he tested her, "Is Lady aware of the situation between me and your son?"

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face turned frosty and said, "Useless young thing, looking for his own humiliation, Shaolong can ignore him. Since when is it his turn to make decisions?" She continued with a smile, "If not for the fact that you're excellent in both martial arts and scholarly pursuits, and you were able to lure Xu Hai to his death under such circumstances, I won't even be bothered to say all these to you."

Xiang Shaolong felt his heart run cold, the people in this era really treat a

human life as nothing. Seeing that she's so astute and formidable, he knows that he cannot offend her, so he said respectfully, "Would Lady please guide me."

Lady Pingyuan's attitude warmed up and said gently, "Shaolong should be very familiar with the situation in Zhao. The King of Zhao favors Zhao Mu and this person hates you, but do you know the reason why?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "It seems that it's because I took his Lady Ya away from him."

Lady Pingyuan's sharp eyes shot an icy look at him and said with a cold humph, "You think too lowly of Zhao Mu, why would he give up a rare capable talent like you over a slut that everyone can have."

On hearing the way she described Zhao Ya, Xiang Shaolong naturally felt very uncomfortable. But he has to admit that what she's saying is true, or at least that was what Zhao Ya was like in the past. At the same time he was curious and asked, "What could be the reason then?"

Lady Pingyuan smiled mysteriously and said, "Because his Majesty has taken a liking to you."

Xiang Shaolong immediately felt himself go numb and he exclaimed hoarsely, "What?"

On seeing his expression, Lady Pingyuan giggled, "You're really muddleheaded, if not because Xiaocheng is looking at you differently, why

would he give you such a good task.” She continued after staring at him intently, covered her mouth and smile, “Anyone who likes men will not let you off, Shaolong you’d better be careful,”

Xiang Shaolong saw that her eyes seems to be speaking volumes now and she looked coy. His gaze can’t help but drop down to her perky chest and felt an itch in his heart. However he quickly thought of the great enmity between him and her son over Su Nu’s death and had to stop himself from uttering the flirtatious words that was about to come out from his mouth. He sighed and said, “I understand, that’s why Zhao Mu will use all methods to kill me, but I’m also worried that Prince Shaoyuan might be secretly plotting against me!”

Lady Pingyuan smiled mysteriously and regained her icy expression and said, “Let’s not talk about this first. Shaolong, tell me honestly, in the whole wide world now, who has the capability of stopping the thieving Qins from attacking eastwards?”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, as he’s still not that familiar with the situation in the warring states period now and cannot think of such a person. But he has to reply her or Lady Pingyuan will surely be offended.

As he was thinking, Lady Pingyuan hinted gently, “Don’t tell me Shaolong doesn’t even know the person who helped Handan during its difficult period 6 years ago?”

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed, “It’s Prince Xinling!”

258BC, the King of Qin sent his generals to attack Zhao and heavily surrounded Handan while Wei sent Jin Bi to help but the King of Qin threatened them. The King of Wei was frightened and actually ordered Jin Bi not to move his troops. Later Prince Xinling used Hou Ying's trick to obtain the military token and told his man Zhu Hai to kill Jin Bi and to usurp his troops. That year Prince Xinling defeated the Qin army greatly right under the walls of Handan and even Qin's main general Zheng Anping surrendered to the Zhaos.

This battle caused the reputation of Qin to fall greatly while Prince Xinling became a respected man by everyone. But because of this, Prince Xinling offended the Wei king and was unable to return home. After staying in Zhao for a many years, he only returned to Wei last year after the death of Prince Pingyuan.

Now it's Lady Pingyuan's turn to return to Wei, and of course it's because once again Prince Xinling has solidified his power and is inviting Lady Pingyuan back.

Lady Pingyuan gladly commented, "Now Prince Xinling is the only one who can gather the world to fight against the Qin, so unless Shaolong wants to throw in your lot with the Qins, or else the only place that you can stay on will be this choice. If I am willing to recommend, I guarantee that you will be highly regarded."

Xiang Shaolong knows that the only way is to try to delay. Luckily no matter how smart or formidable she is, she will never guess that he has Emperor Qin as one of his moves, so he got up and thanked her, "Thank you, Lady, for

your recommendation!”

The 2 were about to continue their conversation when Prince Shaoyuan rushed in excitedly and shouted, “Mother!”

Lady Pingyuan said angrily, “Shut up!” She turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, “Imperial Protector will you please go back first, I’ll discuss with you in details what we’ve talked about at a later time.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly thinking that Prince Shaoyuan has come at the right time, so he hurriedly bid his farewell and left.

## Chapter 2

### Tribulations in love

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When Xiang Shaolong returned to his residence, Cheng Xu came up and told him, "Someone from the Wu family is looking for you."

Xiang Shaolong was greatly surprised and with Cheng Xu's accompaniment, went to the quiet side hall.

A tanned man of about 35 or 36, with 2 exquisite 'lian' made of steel crossed behind his back, looking like swords without scabbards, standing straight in the middle of the hall, his eyes shining, with an imposing aura about him.

The pair of 'lian' is about 5 feet long, and it looks like something between a spear and a halberd, just very much shorter.

That person saw Xiang Shaolong, a gleam shot past his eyes and he knelt down, "Wu Zhuo pays his respects to Grand Young Master-in-law."

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed as he knows that he is the leader of the Wu family's secret army and hurriedly helped him up. Cheng Xu thoughtfully made his exit.

After they were seated, Wu Zhuo said, "Under Master's orders, we've been scouting ahead for Grand Young Master-in-law, and indeed we found out something."

Xiang Shaolong saw his somber expression and was secretly alarmed.

Wu Zhuo continued in a low voice, “I don’t know who leaked the news, but the most vicious horse thieves between the borders of Wei and Zhao are aware that you are bringing treasures and Zhao’s prettiest ladies and traveling towards Daliang. The situation is extremely unfavorable for you.”

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows, “The Weis won’t just sit by and do nothing right?”

Wu Zhuo replied, “Someone from Wei secretly told us that not only will King Anli not send anyone to protect you, he even supplied horses and weapons to one of the biggest group of horse thieves called Hui Hu and secretly ordered them to attack your convoy.”

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, “Isn’t that Hui Hu the one who attacked us within the borders of Zhao? Why did he go to Wei?”

Wu Zhuo replied, “It’s the same person. At that time they suffered heavy losses after their attack failed, and later the Zhaos pursued them, that’s why they escaped to the Wei border and gathered dissidents on the way. Now they have more than 1000 men, not a force to be taken lightly.”

Xiang Shaolong is getting a headache over all these. Firstly why would the King of Wei send men to deal with him, secondly how did he end up working with Hui Hu’s group of horse thieves.

Wu Zhuo added, “All along, we’ve suspected that the few groups of horse

thieves within the Zhao border has the backing of the King of Wei so that they will weaken Zhao's strength. That's why every time they are in danger, they will escape to the borders of Wei and now this has affirmed our theory."

Xiang Shaolong is getting a splitting headache, the more he finds out about the relations between the various states, the more he feels that the complicated relationship is making him even more confused. He furrowed his brows and asked, "But this time we're giving the Third Princess of Zhao to the Weis, why would the King of Wei use such methods to receive us?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "I'm not very sure of the real reason, but we can guess that this involves the power struggle between the King of Wei and Prince Xinling. Ever since Prince Xinling stole the military token and defeated the Qin army, his accomplishments is considered greater than his master, so naturally this will incur the wrath and jealousy of the King of Wei. Besides Prince Xinling has stayed in Handan for a long time, so if the King of Wei can destroy the marriage agreement, the most affected by this will naturally be the relationship between Prince Xinling and the Zhaos." He continued, "And the marriage agreement is brought about by Prince Xinling single handedly."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself 'Heavens!' Why are the relationships between the people in the warring states period so complicated and incomprehensible. Lady Pingyuan was trying to recruit him on behalf of Prince Xinling earlier, and the Zhaos have a more sinister plot to steal Prince Xinling's 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'. What kind of a relationship is all these?

Wu Zhuo whispered, "We have spies in Hu Hui's camp, and apparently Hu Hui hates you to the core and is determined to capture you and all the ladies



alive and rape all of them right in front of your eyes in order to give vent to his anger.”

Xiang Shaolong gave a cold snort, “That’s only wishful thinking on his part.” He sighed and continued, “Are there any news of that person who does not wish to be a human but wants to be a beast instead, Xiao Weimou?”

Wu Zhuo shook his head, “This person is famous for being mysterious, every time he attacks it’s a surprise, there’s no clue about an impending attack at all. He’s a lot more frightening than Hui Hu.”

Xiang Shaolong is so vexed he felt like pulling out his hair, and said seriously, “The route to Wei was planned by Zhao Mu long ago, with the approval of the King of Zhao, so it cannot be changed. If the person who leaked the news is Zhao Mu, this means that the enemy will be very familiar with our route, so we’ll always be in a situation where we can only react to circumstances.”

Wu Zhuo smiled meaningfully, “Would Grand Young Master-in-law be someone who listens to orders blindly?”

Xiang Shaolong chortled and nodded, “You really understand me.” He thought to himself this time he will have to use all his tricks and make use of the modern military knowledge he learnt to deal with the various traps laid along the way.

Wu Zhuo added, “I’ve brought with me a hundred good fighters, to become Grand Young Master-in-law’s family warriors. Hei! To be able to work under Grand Young Master-in-law, we’re all very excited.”

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, and after the two of them secretly discussed the details, Wu Zhuo left in a hurry.

He'd just stepped out of the hall when he learnt that the pretty maid Xiaozhao had been waiting patiently for him for a long time.

Xiang Shaolong told her to return first. He found Cheng Xu and told him briefly the dangerous situation.

Cheng Xu's face turned pale on hearing it and said, "I'll find Zha Yuanyu immediately to discuss this matter and tell him to bring more rations and increase fortifications so that we can deal with the thieves' attacks."

Zha Yuanyu is Cheng Xu's assistant, and also the rations officer for this trip, in charge of setting camp and all co-ordinations. If the enemy were to attack, they'll either look for dangerous spots to lay a trap, or to steal their rations. Therefore it's a must to increase the defenses of the camp.

After Cheng Su left, Xiang Shaolong recollected his thoughts and went to the inner courtyard.

Xiaozhao, Xiaoyu and the rest of the maids were all in the hall, happily sewing the armor for him that he will be using to hold his steel needles.

When they saw him arriving, they surrounded him and frantically helped him remove his heavy armor, and tied the inner armor made from cowhide, filled with small and long pockets, with strings around his waist. As if it's a game, they laughed as they slipped the needles into the sturdy pouches, revealing

only about an inch of the tip of the needles.

He tried a few moves, rapidly pulling out the needles and throwing them towards the wooden door, hitting it with a 'chook chook' noise. He realized that although he's wearing about 20 over catties of flying needles and his armor, but he could still handle the extra weight without any hindrance to his movement and speed.

Xiang Shaolong's mood changed for the better and after bantering with the maids for a while, he went towards Lady Ya's room.

The 8 maids continued working hard to make this needle pouch more sturdy and perfect.

Inside the bedroom Lady Ya seems lost in thought.

Xiang Shaolong walked over and saw that Lady Ya was standing with her back to him next to a window, looking out at the woods, deep in thought.

Zhao Ya has changed into a robe with 2 long silk tassels hanging down, draped with a well tailored and eye catching robe, her hair combed into 2 buns. Contrasted with her slender waist and fair skin, she looks utterly bewitching.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself this is truly nature's finest specimen, no wonder she can charm so many men and become the most famous wanton in Zhao. He tiptoed behind her and grabbed her shoulders, pressing his body against her pert buttocks.

He had just uttered the word 'Lady' when Zhao Ya shook violently and struggled.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked and let his hands go.

That Zhao Ya ran to a side and turned around, her face filled with fury, and surprisingly it's the royal Third Princess Zhao Qian.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he's in trouble and hurriedly knelt down but he was at a loss as to what to say.

Zhao Qian saw that it's Xiang Shaolong and her anger subsided. In replacement she blushed deeply, stamped her feet and ran away.

Zhao Ya could be heard calling after her outside but obviously she did not manage to stop her.

Xiang Shaolong stood up, her fragrance still lingering on his body, his heart beating erratically.

Lady Ya walked in and she looked unhappy. She stared at him and walked over, asking icily, "Shaolong! What have you done to Zhao Qian?"

Xiang Shaolong was very unhappy with her tone of voice and attitude. Besides he was not in a good mood after hearing Wu Zhuo's news so he thought to himself, so be it that you do not trust me, why should I explain to you. He gave a cold snort and walked out the door.

After all Lady Ya is one who is used to having her orders obeyed, and although she loves Xiang Shaolong extremely, she is firstly annoyed that he touched the untouchable Third Princess, and because she could not tolerate such an attitude, she cried out angrily, "Stay there!"

Xiang Shaolong stopped walking, and thought of her promiscuous past and also how she drugged him with aphrodisiacs to help Zhao Mu deal with him, and how she allowed Zhao Mu to take liberties with her while in the carriage. He'd suppressed all these feelings usually but now they've come bubbling up to the surface and he felt extremely upset. He stared at her coldly and asked, "What instructions does Lady has?"

Lady Ya's heart turned cold on seeing his look and she softened. She moved to him and asked a little fearfully, "Don't you know you cannot antagonize Zhao Qian?"

Xiang Shaolong was not appreciative of her change in tone at all and said emotionlessly, "Your servant will not dare to do so in future, may I take my leave now?"

Lady Ya thought to herself that she has not blamed him wrongly, so how could she tolerate such an attitude from him so she stamped her feet and said, "Fine! Xiang Shaolong, get lost now."

Xiang Shaolong thought of the past and felt that without this woman, he'll save himself a lot of troubles. Although life in future may not be so easy, but he can't really be bothered now and left. Of course he did not forget to take the inner armor with him as he left.

That night Xiang Shaolong did not step into Lady Ya's abode at all. After dinner, he went to the garden to practice his flying needles and after happily practicing for a while, his anger towards Lady Ya ceased as well. Just as he was pondering if he should look for her, Zhao Da suddenly came and knelt down on seeing him, his eyes filled with unshed tears of fury and helplessness as he said, "Master Xiang please decide for us brothers. That conniving thief Prince Shaoyuan came to look for Lady and after talking to her in private for a moment, Lady invited him into her room."

Xiang Shaolong was dumbfounded. Prince Shaoyuan had just killed Lady Ya's loyal subordinate Zhao Er, and now this wanton is inviting him to his room. No wonder Zhao Da is so furious and for him to come and complain to him, it's obvious that he is prepared to lose his life over this.

Xiang Shaolong helped him up and instructed, "Take it that you've never come to look for me, understand?"

Zhao Da was livid, "I'm not afraid of anything now."

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed and instructed him not to follow him. He went towards Lady Ya's residence and deliberately took a detour and went through the back garden. Naturally the guards dared not stop him but when he reached the inner courtyard from the back garden, Xiaozhao and the other maids were all shocked and their faces turned pale, thinking of blocking his way.

Xiang Shaolong had a murderous look and uttered coldly, "Give way!"

The ladies dared not really stop him and they retreated.

Xiang Shaolong went to Lady Ya's bedroom and kicked the door open with his leg.

Prince Shaoyuan and Lady Ya cried out in alarm at the same time.

The two of them were sitting next to each other on a long chair, Prince Shaoyuan's hands reached out and hugged Lady Ya tightly, as if he was going to kiss her lips while Lady Ya was trying to push him off, her face coy. The scene is enough to make Xiang Shaolong burn with fury.

Prince Shaoyuan stood up angrily and pointed at him, "What audacity!"

Xiang Shaolong recollected his thoughts and thought that if it comes to reasoning, he really does not have the authority to barge in like that and spoil their fun. But in this era where the strong represents everything, what counts is talent, so there's nothing much to be said. Besides, Prince Shaoyuan caused the death of Su Nu, and he can't wait to rip him apart. His eyes glaring murderously, his hands on the pommel of his Rainbow Sword, he stared at him unwaveringly, making Prince Shaoyuan's heart turn cold.

Lady Ya actually had no intention of canoodling with Prince Shaoyuan, but because Prince Shaoyuan came to look for her saying that there's something about Xiang Shaolong and Lady Pingyuan that he has to tell her in secret, that's why she invited him into the room. Who'd expect that after he said his words, he tried to force himself on her and Xiang Shaolong happen to barge in right at this time, scattering her wits.

It was just a lover's quarrel for them earlier but now that Prince Shaoyuan is involved, this has turned into another matter.

She saw that Xiang Shaolong's expression was icy cold, as if he's going to kill someone. She was so frightened that she jumped up and stood between the two of them, screaming, "No!"

Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows he cannot kill Prince Shaoyuan, and he heard the footsteps of Prince Shaoyuan's men hurrying over from the outside so he took the opportunity to step down and said, "Protect him if you want! From today onwards, I shall not be bothered with your private affairs."

He turned and left, ignoring the curses of the shocked Prince Shaoyuan.

He bumped right into Prince Shaoyuan's 4 warriors in the hall.

The 4 of them were overcome by his aura and moved aside, watching as he left.

Xiang Shaolong returned to his own room and felt relaxed instead.

All this time he has been troubled by Zhao Ya's scandalous past.

He's never had the experience of engaging with wanton women. Even on the day that he was sent to this era by the time machine, he was having fun with the queen of bars Zhou Xiangmei, but that was just a one night stand, and he'd never think of living with her.



Now that Zhao Ya has stated that she wants to change for the better and follow him, that is another matter. He saw for himself the 2 of them hugging and it doesn't matter if any force was used, the fact is Zhao Ya invited him into her room. Obviously wantonness is already in her nature, and never thought of defending herself against men. This point is enough to make him furious.

The door opened, Zhao Ya walked in looking sad and angry and after she closed the door, she leaned against the wall at the side, looking sadly at the calm and composed Xiang Shaolong who was sitting on the rug.

Lady Ya lowered her head, "It's my fault for misunderstanding you."

Xiang Shaolong said emotionlessly, "You've asked Third Princess?"

Lady Ya nodded her head slightly, and asked angrily, "Why didn't you explain to me? I have feelings of jealousy as well!"

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "This doesn't matter now, it's late! Lady please return and rest! We have to be on our way again tomorrow."

Lady Ya looked at him in shock, and on seeing his cold expression, she threw herself into his arms, her arms going around his solid neck and cried in alarm, "Shaolong! Please listen to my explanation, he tried to force a kiss on me, I..."

Xiang Shaolong remained unmoving as a rock, not even twitching the muscles on his face. He looked at her coldly and said, "If you can explain why you invited a man who has just cruelly killed your loyal subordinate, and an

enemy of mine, as well as a lecherous ex-lover of yours into your room, I will forgive you.”

Lady Ya was at a loss for words.

For someone like her who grew up in a rich and powerful family, she wouldn't be overly bothered about the life and death of a subordinate. As for letting Prince Shaoyuan into her room, although it was Prince Shaoyuan who initiated it, but at that time she really harbored the thought of having her revenge against Xiang Shaolong. Of course she did not expect Xiang Shaolong to barge in.

Hot tears rushed out.

Xiang Shaolong smiled, “Lady! I am not bothered about how you and Zhao Mu joined forces to harm me, because I thought that you will concede to me with all your heart from now on. Only today did I realize it's just wishful thinking on my part. Even if you want to copulate, you don't have to do it with Prince Shaoyuan! There are a few hundred strong young men around here, choosing any one of them will make me feel better.”

“Pak!”

A handprint appeared on Xiang Shaolong's face.

Lady Ya covered her face and wailed as she retreated, crying out wretchedly, “You insult me, I really...”

Xiang Shaolong raised his voice, “Shut up!” He touched his cheek and added, “This slap will signify the end of our relationship, you can be with whoever you like, I will not be bothered. If you find me a hindrance to your eyes, just ask your imperial brother to kill me. But don’t blame me for warning you, whoever tries to kill or harm me, will have to pay a bitter price.” And he walked out of the room furiously.

Lady Ya screamed, “No!” and tugged his clothes.

Xiang Shaolong pushed her away and left.

Extremely furious, he thought of his 2 greatest enemy.

What kind of a world is this, he obviously knows that Zhao Mu and Prince Shaoyuan has committed atrocious crimes, how can he continue to let them strut about so publicly.

No!

I must become this era’s strongest person, by then I need not bend over backwards just for survival, and live so unhappily.

In order to avoid Lady Ya, he hid himself in a dark corner. As expected, Lady Ya ran out in tears looking for him.

Xiang Shaolong went back to his room, thinking to himself that he won’t be able to get a good sleep tonight, so he might as well practice with his newly set up climbing equipment to see if it works.

Once he made up his mind, he felt like a little kid who is going to have fun. He changed into a black outfit, brought his equipment and climbed out his window into the courtyard.

The only target for his practice is naturally Lady Pingyuan and her son. Under the cover of the night, he used his ability and swiftly and quietly made his way to the courtyard where Lady Pingyuan is staying.

When that lone building came into his sight, he saw that security was tight. Unless one can morph into a bird, he can forget about slipping in. Lamps were lighted in the hall, and voices could be heard.

Luckily Xiang Shaolong has the ability to climb up high.

He first chose a tall and sturdy old tree about 10 feet high and shot out his hook, aiming at the branches about 3 feet away before attaching the rope to the clasp around his waist. Making use of the pulley he pulled on the rope and rose up, and in a short while reached the horizontal branch.

He continued on like this and after a while he was almost at the top of the wall, about 8 feet high, the scene in the courtyard right below his eyes.

He looked out for an opportunity and once again shot the hook out with the projectile, hitting right on target the wall on the other side of the courtyard. When the hooked which was wrapped in soft hide landed on the tiles, it only emitted a very faint noise.

Xiang Shaolong tugged on the hook, until the hook was tightly embedded on

the wooden beam of the roof. He tested its sturdiness before hooking it to the clasp on his waist again and leapt off the tree, and quietly slid down to the roof opposite.

He then leaned down and took out a hollow and round metal tube, with the hole on one end bigger than the other. He pressed the wider hole tightly on the tile while he plastered his ears to the narrow end of the hole. Like a modern doctor with his stethoscope, the sounds in the room immediately amplified and filled his ears.

He heard Prince Shaoyuan said angrily, "If not for that Xiang Shaolong barging in, I'll surely be able to deal with that slut. Humph! Let's see if she dares to disobey me."

Lady Pingyuan was heard saying, "My child why be so impatient now. Zhao Ya is yours sooner or later, and even Zhao Qian won't be able to escape from your clutches, humph!"

Xiang Shaolong felt his skin go numb, he did not expect that Lady Pingyuan to actually be of the same thinking with her son.

Lady Pingyuan continued, "You better not go and bother Xiang Shaolong, this person can be made use of greatly by your uncle."

Prince Shaoyuan said angrily, "He treats me so badly, how can I take this lying down. Unless Mother can tell me clearly what you intend to do to him, or else I will certainly be at odds with him." He then tried cajoling, "Mother! I'm all grown up now, I should be able to share you and Uncle's burdens!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly prayed, hoping that she'll reveal it.

Luckily Lady Pingyuan has always spoiled her son and couldn't withstand his begging and said, "Do you know why Uncle kept pushing for the marriage between Zhao and Wei, and deliberately leaked the news about the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' to the Zhaos?"

Xiang Shaolong felt his body turn cold on hearing this, so it turns out that 'Lu Gong's secret manual' is part of the plot. From this one can see that how Prince Xinling, one of the 4 Princes of the Warring States period, is so formidable.

Prince Shaoyuan begged, "Mother! Tell me quickly!"

Lady Pingyuan said, "This is a big secret, besides you and me, not a third person must know of this, understand?"

Prince Shaoyuan hurriedly gave his promise.

Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before she said, "I have no choice but to let you know as well, because we'll need you to coordinate with the skilled pugilists Uncle sent to put this important mission into motion."

Prince Shaoyuan tapped his chest and said, "Leave it to me."

Lady Pingyuan said, "In order to steal 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', the Zhaos will certainly send their best warrior to Wei. Now that they've sent Xiang Shaolong, this person is both skilled in swordplay and intelligent, just the

right person for us.”

Prince Shaoyuan is not an idiot, and he uttered in shock, “Is Uncle trying to recruit him/ But he and I...”

Lady Pingyuan interrupted him coldly, “Don’t worry! Your enemy is my enemy, I’ll make sure he’ll die without even a proper burial place.”

Prince Shaoyuan said happily, “That’s really great.”

Xiang Shaolong who was eavesdropping from the roof was furious and really felt like leaping down and stabbing both of them.

So it turns out that Lady Pingyuan has an ulterior motive with him.

Such a vicious women, is really a fine specimen of this era where the strongest will survive.

Lady Pingyuan said in a low voice, “Once we bribe that fool, we can arrange for him to assassinate the useless King of Wei. With your uncle’s help and that fool’s excellent martial arts, it will certainly succeed.”

Prince Shaoyuan shivered and asked hoarsely, “What?”

Lady Pingyuan humph, “Look how alarmed you are, as soon as Xiang Shaolong succeeds, your uncle’s men will kill him on the spot and there’ll be no witnesses left. Then we’ll push all the blame to the Zhaos, and by then your uncle will be able to openly send troops to attack Zhao and gain control

of military power. By then won't the state of Wei will be in his pocket?"

Xiang Shaolong felt cold sweat running down his body on hearing it. Only now did he understand why Lady Pingyuan said Prince Shaoyuan will be able to get both Zhao Qian and Zhao Ya.

Prince Shaoyuan exclaimed joyously, "This is indeed a perfect plan, but Xiang Shaolong is no fool. I'm afraid that he might pretend to be on our side but later complain about us to the King of Wei. That would be terrible."

Lady Pingyuan smiled icily, "Do not belittle me and your uncle. I married your father in the past with the hope that he can ascend the throne.

Unfortunately he was unable to succeed and died early as well, or else you could have already be the King of Zhao. We have thought of a way to deal with Xiang Shaolong, and that is to force him to a dead end so that he has no choice but to throw in his lot with us."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brow, and thought to himself what are the ways they have to force him to a dead end?

Naturally Prince Shaoyuan couldn't guess as well and kept pressing Lady Pingyuan for the answer.

The regal lady who is beautiful on the outside but venomous as a snake on the inside said with a lowered voice, "As long as Zhao Qian's virginity is lost, where else can he go?"

Xiang Shaolong almost exclaimed out loud on hearing this, and at the same



time was glad that his unplanned trip here has allowed him to overhear such an important plot. Naturally he concentrated hard to continue to listen in on the plans this mother and son team has for Zhao Qian.

## Chapter 3

### Turbulence in the camp

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That night Xiang Shaolong did not sleep a wink after he returned to his room, and spent the night thinking. Under Ding Shou and Wa Che's escort, the convoy passed the Zhang river and entered the wilderness that belongs to the state of Wei. Lady Ya knows that he is still angry so she stayed inside the carriage and did not bother him. Xiaozhao and the other maids looked unhappy and sad, because Lady Ya has given strict orders and they dared not speak to him. Prince Shaoyuan deliberately showed his uncooperativeness by lagging behind and slowing down the group. Xiang Shaolong was confident and was not bothered at all. By dusk, they've only managed to travel about 20 odd li.

By now Xiang Shaolong's attention was solely on the enemy who will appear any time now. He chose a highland with a mountain backing it to set up camp. Xiang Shaolong placed his own commander's tent as well as Lady Ya and Zhao Qian's tents in the middle next to the mountain, the remaining 500 warriors split into 3 groups to set up their tents to the extreme right. Prince Shaoyuan's tents were set up at the extreme left, which shows an obvious divide in the camps. Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows what he is up to, because tonight the highly skilled martial artist sent by Prince Xinling will infiltrate into Zhao Qian's camp from his side before setting off drug inducing smoke so that he can sneak into Zhao Qian's tent and despoil her. And the person who volunteered to do this is Prince Shaoyuan. If not for the fact that Xiang Shaolong is aware of their plot, it's very possible that they have a high

chance of success. Who would think that they'd have to be on the alert against an inside thief?

Xiang Shaolong stood straight at the highest point of the mountain, looking at the rolling hills below him and secretly thought to himself that no wonder Prince Xinling's men would choose this place to strike. That's because even when one is near the area, they will be difficult to spot and Prince Shaoyuan knows this secret, that's why he deliberately delayed the journey. By now Cheng Xu has come up to him and commented, "I did not know that Imperial Protector is so well versed in setting camp. Even Zha Yuanyu who thinks of himself as an expert was complimenting your layout for being convenient and flexible and he's extremely impressed." Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he's had 2000 more years of experience since their time, naturally he's good at it but when he replied, he was very humble instead. Cheng Xu lowered his voice, "I've sent my trusted aide to make contact with your man Wu Zhuo and told him not to come to the camp for the time being. Hei! I think Sir feels that something is happening." Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this is not a feeling, but a 'fact'. He is dealing with Prince Shaoyuan tonight so he does not want Wu Zhuo's men to be embroiled in all this so that things will not be even more complicated. Right at this time Zha Yuanyu who is in charge of setting up camp came to them to report that his task is accomplished.

Although Xiang Shaolong knows that no matter if it's Hu Hui who has an old enmity with him, or Xiao Weimou and his team of assassins from Qi, they will only strike when he's deep into the state of Wei so that he won't be able to run back to Zhao. Therefore he instructed Zha Yuanyu to remove the 40 carts from the mules and line them along the circumference of the camp so that

they can be the first line of barriers against enemy attacks. This move made Zha Yuanyu even more confident about him and he went gladly on his way to work. Cheng Xu saw that he is so insightful and was even more in awe of him. Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before he said in a lowered voice, “I have something really important for you to do, but you must not ask the reason why. Find me a group of soldiers with good arm strength and prepare tools for digging ditches and await my orders. But you must hide it from others, especially Prince Shaoyuan, understand!” Cheng Xu thought that he was going lay traps around the camp and left to follow his orders. Xiang Shaolong prepared himself for quite some time, sighed deeply and forced himself to look for Lady Ya. In order to deal with Prince Shaoyuan, he can only make peace with her.

The soldiers were setting the fire to prepare dinner and when they saw Xiang Shaolong, they greeted this commander respectfully from the bottom of their hearts. Xiang Shaolong was secretly happy and knows that the incident where he killed Xu Hai has been imprinted in their minds. When he give them commands in future, it'll be a lot easier. The cloth that separated the camp from the tents came slowly into view. Zhao Da and the other two were chatting with a few of Zhao Qian's personal guards and they stood at attention when they saw Xiang Shaolong. After Xiang Shaolong smiled and greeted them, he went into the restricted area of the camp. There are 4 tents in there, Lady Ya and Zhao Qian stays in the bigger tents. Xiao Zhao and the other maids were preparing dinner at the empty space and was ecstatic when they saw Xiang Shaolong. Xiao Zhao and Xiao Mei even lowered their head and cried. Xiang Shaolong replied them with a smile and went into Lady Ya's private tent. Zhao Ya was sitting numbly at a corner, her eyes swollen, obviously she has been crying. Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed again, and

began to understand that he is growing to love her more and more, that's why he could not tolerate her outrageous past or her being close with other men from now on. Zhao Ya saw him coming in and she stood up in alarm and joy, unable to believe her eyes and cried out, "Shaolong!" Xiang Shaolong smiled, "You're not allowed to cry, I'll leave if you cry." Zhao Ya forced her tears back and shouted, throwing herself into his arms, her shoulders shaking but she dared not cry out loud. Naturally Xiang Shaolong's shoulder was soon wet. Xiang Shaolong caressed her back and said gently, "Do you still dare to be disobedient in future?" Zhao Ya shook her head furiously, meek as a lamb. Xiang Shaolong hugged her and sat down, wiped away her tears and said with a smile, "Now let me test how obedient you are. Now go and look for Zhao Qian and tell her that tonight, I want all the women in here to hide in my tent. This must be kept a secret." Zhao Ya looked at him in shock, but as afraid that she'll offend him again so she kept nodding her head, looking so obedient yet pitiful. How enchanting. Xiang Shaolong can't bear to see her like that so he whispered in her ear, "I'm afraid that someone will sneak in tonight and do something bad to her!" Zhao Ya heard his gentle tone and she became bolder and kissed him cautiously, saying, "You really will forgive me?" Xiang Shaolong smiled and nodded. Zhao Ya stole a peek at him and asked, "You really won't put it to heart at all?" Xiang Shaolong sighed, "What can I do? Who told me to love you so much that I can't stay away!" Zhao Ya gave a shout of cheer and kissed him.

After a long while, Zhao Ya said with much sufferance, "You almost scared me to death, if you do that to me again, I can only die." Her pretty eyes reddened again. Xiang Shaolong felt bad for her and after consoling her, slapped her hard on her buttocks and commanded, "Aren't you setting off to

work for me?” Zhao Ya stood up and holding his hand, asked, “If Zhao Qian were to ask me, how did Xiang Shaolong know that someone is going to attack her camp, how should I answer her?” Xiang Shaolong knows that she has been assured and his alertness has returned. He knows that she’s using Zhao Qian as an excuse to ask him, so he laughed and said, “Don’t worry! She will trust me absolutely, just do as I say.” Zhao Ya was frightened and exclaimed, “Shaolong! It’s not that I don’t trust you! I’m just curious. And you still want to treat me like that.” Xiang Shaolong saw how expressive she looked and felt his desire rising but he knows that tonight is not the time to have such fun so he kept his urge down and pushed her out of the tent. He then went to look for Cheng Xu, “I want you to dig a few holes that can hide some people around Third Princess’s main tent, and at the same time find 20 expert archers to hide with us in the holes and enjoy the grand event that’s about to happen.” Cheng Xu was dumbfounded on hearing that. After giving instructions about the details, Xiang Shaolong chortled and returned to his tent for his meal.

The cold wind swept through the land. The crescent moon hung high up on the sky, illuminating the camp that was in total darkness. Besides the soldiers patrolling the circumference of the camp, everyone else was sound asleep after a tiring day of travel. Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu, Zhao Da, Zhao Wu, Zhao Qi and the 20 archers were the exception. They were hidden separately in the hidden holes at the 4 corners surrounding Zhao Qian’s tent, waiting for the grand event that Xiang Shaolong said will happen. They have fought to stay alert for many hours, and that is certainly not a comfortable stay. In another 4 hours the dawn will break.

Just as Xiang Shaolong’s own confidence was a little shaken as well, there

was a sound that came from Prince Shaoyuan's side of the camp. Everyone was immediately refreshed and using the moonlight and their eyes which has long been accustomed to the darkness, they turned towards the direction of the sound and stared.

A skinny and short shadow that looks like the size of a child snuck in quietly. He moved nimbly to the nearest tent and in his hand he was holding a pipe looking thing. A faint light was seen. Everyone could clearly see that the intruder is a wretched looking man who is as skinny as a monkey, his hand holding something that looks like a tiny stove with a round pipe attached to it, and the fire was lighted in the stove. That person waited until the firelight in the stove was steady before he pushed the tube that was emitting smoke under the tent. Xiang Shaolong dared not even exhale loudly, looking that this person working slowly as he put the drugged smoke into the 4 tents. That person let out a bird cry, obviously the signal to summon his gang and truly, 10 odd people came over and spread out at the various important positions, surrounding the 4 tents. Another 5 or 6 people came later, one of them is naturally Prince Shaoyuan. Everyone worked quietly, not daring to make any noise. The atmosphere was tense and heavy.

Prince Shaoyuan went to the door of Zhao Qian's camp while the others moved to the tents of the maids, leaving only Lady Ya's tent, which no one touched. Xiang Shaolong was fuming as he saw this, these beasts won't even let innocent maids off. If not for the fact that Lady Ya is also Prince Shaoyuan's target, and there is no way he can split himself, she would not have escaped tonight as well. Once the stove that sent the drugging smoke was extinguished, the short man made a hand signal and Prince Shaoyuan and his men moved unanimously into the tents. Xiang Shaolong knows that

it's time and he gave the secret signal. A 'chook chook' sound was heard.

The light arrows shot out from the heavy bows in the holes, eliminating the 10 odd men who were keeping a look out around the camp. Prince Shaoyuan and the rest realized the tents were empty and they cried out in alarm, but by then the 10 odd men outside already fell to the ground with a cry. Torches were lit. Another group of soldiers led by Zha Yuanyu surrounded the ladies camp. Those who snuck into the tents rushed out of it. By now Xiang Shaolong and his men threw away their bows and jumped out of the holes with their swords drawn, starting a merciless attack on them. For a moment the sounds of weapons clashing and battle cries thundered in the air.

The person Xiang Shaolong targeted was Prince Shaoyuan so he took out a flying needle first and threw it at his thigh just as he was scrambling out of the tent. Prince Shaoyuan screamed and fell to the floor, dropping the sword in his hand. Xiang Shaolong dashed forward and kicked him hard on the groin. Prince Shaoyuan screamed like a pig being slaughtered, his cries echoing in the night sky and he collapsed onto the ground, the heart wrenching pain making him squirm violently on the floor. He does not even have the strength to strike now. Xiang Shaolong moved diagonally across, his sword shone, and decapitated an enemy who was about to retaliate. Thus the battle ended, with the enemies either killed instantly or seriously injured and captured, none escaped. The whole camp was a flurry of activity. The soldiers all ran towards them. Lady Pingyuan who was waiting for good news at the other side rushed over with her family warriors as well.

The cloth surrounding the tents were pulled down, the torches illuminating everything as if it was daylight. Zha Yuanyu's men stopped Lady Pingyuan's



men from charging over. Xiang Shaolong chortled and walked over to Prince Shaoyuan who was still writhing in pain on the ground and gave him a hard kick on his waist so that he turned over in pain. He then stepped on his chest, his long sword pointing at his throat and smiled at Prince Shaoyuan whose muscles twitched so much that his face was contorted and said, "Hey! So it's Prince Shaoyuan, I'm sorry if I've offended you." Lady Pingyuan's angry and frightened voice rose up, "Xiang Shaolong!" Xiang Shaolong was still staring at Prince Shaoyuan as he shouted, "Yuanyu how can you be so rude towards Lady, quickly invite Lady over." By now Lady Ya and Zhao Qian emerged from the commander's tent and looking at the person next to Xiang Shaolong and the surroundings, they all knew clearly what had happened.

Although a few hundred people surrounded them, no one said a word, and only the crackling sound of the burning torches were heard. Lady Pingyuan walked over furiously and exclaimed, "Aren't you going to release my son quickly." Prince Shaoyuan was about to say something when Xiang Shaolong's long sword moved forward, the tip of the sword in his mouth. He was so frightened he dared not move, and even his moans stopped. Xiang Shaolong looked at Lady Pingyuan icily and said somberly, "I, Xiang Shaolong, has been given an important task to escort Princess to Daliang. Now Prince Shaoyuan is in cahoots with outsiders and released drugged smoke in an attempt to outrage Princess's modesty. How is Lady going to explain all these." Lady Pingyuan saw her son's bloodied leg and she was at a total loss and anxiously cried out, "Let him go first before we talk." Xiang Shaolong's eyes were stern as he said determinedly, "No! I am going to execute him on the spot, and bear all responsibilities. At the most we will return to Zhao immediately and I will let his Majesty decide my fate." Lady Pingyuan turned pale and her lips trembled as she uttered, "How dare you!"

Zhao Qian's sweet voice said frostily, "Such a man is worst than a beast, Imperial Protector Xiang, kill him for me!" Although Lady Ya felt that it's inappropriate, she dared not interrupt for fear that Xiang Shaolong will misunderstand that she is trying to protect Prince Shaoyuan. Xiang Shaolong deliberately revealed a cold and cruel smile and looked at Lady Pingyuan challengingly. Lady Pingyuan looked as if she has suddenly aged, and she cried out, "Fine! What do you want before you'll let my son go." Xiang Shaolong turned his head and looked at Zhao Qian, asking with a straight face, "Will Third Princess allow your subordinate to handle this matter totally." Zhao Qian's pretty face blushed and dared not look at him but she lowered her head and nodded slightly. Xiang Shaolong saw how gentle this beauty is and other ideas rose in his head, but he remembered that she is going to marry a Wei and thought it such a pity. He turned his head back towards Lady Pingyuan and said, "I can stop pursuing this matter, but Lady must write a letter of guarantee that Prince Shaoyuan must never again harbor such beastly thoughts towards Princess. What does Lady think?"

Lady Pingyuan gritted her teeth so hard that her silver tooth casing almost cracked. This move of Xiang Shaolong is really formidable, such that she is forced into never bringing this up in front of the King of Zhao to complain against him. Xiang Shaolong is extremely confident, because he knows that she still need to make use of him to assassinate the King of Wei so he's not worried that she will not concede. Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before she finally admitted defeat, "Fine! You're good." Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, "The one who is good is Lady, I am just a little lucky."

## Chapter 4

### The war between a male and female

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The next day when the envoy was getting ready to leave, Lady Pingyuan remained unmoved and refused to leave with the team. Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself and bring with him Zhao Da and the other tree as well as 10 odd specially trained elite soldiers, went to pay a visit to Lady Pingyuan personally. When they reached the tent, Xiang Shaolong told his men to stand guard outside while he went to see Lady Pingyuan alone.

Lady Pingyuan was still furious and she said with a frosty look, "Xiang Shaolong you're good, you've injured my son so badly." Xiang Shaolong knows that she was talking about the hard kick he gave to the groin. He secretly laughed to himself but when he spoke, he sighed instead, "I didn't know he is Prince Shaoyuan at all in the darkness. Luckily I realized in time or I would have killed him." Lady Pingyuan was at a loss for words, but her anger was still unappeased so she stared at him and said, "My son is still weak and is not suited for long travels, you can go to Daliang on your own! I will only leave when he has recovered." Xiang Shaolong looked at her fiery eyes filled with hatred and sighed, "I am in a difficult position and have no choice but to put on an act in front of Zhao Qian. Actually I've considered what Lady told me the other day and have come to a decision long ago."

Lady Pingyuan was stunned for a moment, and this ignited Xiang Shaolong's hope. She eyed him for a moment before she nodded and said, "If you really have such a thought..." Xiang Shaolong interrupted her, "But what Prince

Shaoyuan did last night was obviously done with your approval, and this has aroused my doubts about Lady's sincerity." Lady Pingyuan immediately lost the upper hand. In actual fact ever since Xiang Shaolong seemed to foretell her plan, which she was so confident of and spoil it, she has started fearing him and has no idea how she should deal with this man.

Her instinctive reaction was to lower her eyes. Xiang Shaolong saw that she did not try to deny and knows that she is now confused by his forcefulness. He moved boldly forward, looking closely at her tired yet pretty face and said with a smile, "Shall we talk about this after we reach Daliang? At least you should let me see Prince Xinling first!" Lady Pingyuan saw her standing so close to her and she lifted her head, her face frosty as she said, "Are you trying to be rude to me? How dare you insult your superior?" Xiang Shaolong said calmly, "I just have a secret to tell Lady, but I do not know if Lady is interested in hearing it." Lady Pingyuan was thrown off guard and she asked, "What is it?" Xiang Shaolong moved his lips closer, so close that it was only inches away from her, and deliberately pretended to be mysterious as he said, "I don't know if it was Zhao Mu who leaked out news, but a few groups of horse thieves including Hui Hu are waiting within Wei's border for us, and I heard that Lady is one of their targets."

Lady Pingyuan's face turned pale and she exclaimed hoarsely, "What?" Xiang Shaolong said with a straight face, "I, Xiang Shaolong, can swear to heaven, if I speak a word of falsehood, then let me die a horrible death." He secretly thought that people of this era is not like those in the 21st century, they will not give their vows so easily and now he is witnessing the miraculous use of this method. Lady Pingyuan did not suspect his words as expected. She rolled her eyes for a while before she asked weakly, "Is Hui Hu really part of it?" By

now Xiang Shaolong is absolutely sure that Hui Hu is the King of Wei's man, and because Lady Pingyuan knows this secret, all the more she believes his words. He boldly sat down to her right, his mouth moved close to her ear, almost touching it and said, "The news was relayed to me by the spies the Wu family planted in Wei. They even said the mastermind could very well be the King of Wei himself."

Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows and said, "Can you sit a little further away to talk?" Xiang Shaolong saw that although she looked irritated, her pretty face was blushing and her breathing was faster and knows she's feeling confused whether to reject or welcome him. He can't help but secretly laugh and was even more determined to seek his revenge. He thought to himself, since you can be unscrupulous towards me, why can't I have a little payback, and he gently kissed her rounded ear lobes. Lady Pingyuan's dainty body shook, and was about to reprimand him when Xiang Shaolong retreated to his original position, his mesmerizing eyes looking at her deeply. Her heart immediately started pounding, and the reprimand she was about to utter stuck in her throat.

What is happening? This person injured her son and outraged her modesty, but why didn't she react? Once she thought of this, her face burned and she lowered her face and said quietly, "Fine! We will leave with you."

When Xiang Shaolong returned to his troops who were all packed and ready to leave, he added Wu Zhuo's 100 men into his group, thus increasing his control. These 100 family warriors were well built and alert, and with one look anyone can tell that they're elite fighters. Cheng Xu who has been nervous and apprehensive all this while seems to have been finally reassured,

and his smile is a lot more radiant now. Xiang Shaolong set the trap last night as if he could predict Prince Shaoyuan's evil plot, and this has raised him to almost a god-like status amongst the soldiers. While waiting for Lady Pingyuan's men to dismantle camp, Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo, Cheng Xu and Zha Yuanyu went to a nearby hill to look at the map and discuss the route to take to Daliang.

Wu Zhuo is very familiar with the geography of Wei and he said, "From here to Tangyin, we have official roads which we can travel on. In the past the Weis set up gantries and camps along the roads, and there are watchtowers on higher grounds as well. But according to our scout, not only are the gantries missing along the road now, but we can't even find a single Wei to ask around." Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that if the King of Wei really intends to send someone to attack him, he will not want to do it too far away from the Zhao border so that he will be able to push all the blame and say that the thieves went after them from the Zhao border. Especially when Hui Hu has a personal feud with Xiang Shaolong, so this excuse can be used to shut the Zhaos up and at the same time deal a great blow to Prince Xinling. Hai! All those in power in this era are all conniving people. But he thought about the politicians in the 21st century and felt that maybe it's not so strange after all. Cheng Xu pointed at the river, which forked from the Yellow River, flowing across Tangyin and said, "After we past the river, there's another official road that goes from the east straight towards another large city, Huangcheng, next to the Yellow River. If we were to travel there instead, won't the horse thieves be least expecting that?"

Xiang Shaolong said somberly, "If I'm the horse thief, I will certainly launch an attack while you are crossing the river. They came well prepared and

outnumber us, so the outcome of the fight is predictable.” The other 3 were dumbfounded. Everyone knows that when crossing rivers, there’s no way to defend oneself on the river as the boats are totally exposed to the enemy’s catapults, and it’ll be a perfect opportunity for the horse thieves to attack. Xiang Shaolong is a soldier who went through vigorous training and after thinking for a while, he said decidedly, “No matter which official road we choose, we will still fall into the enemy’s expectations. The other party’s energy is conserved while waiting for us but we will be tired from the travels. The only way is to change this obvious advantage and make the enemy tired instead. That’s the only way we can win with our fewer numbers.” He paused for a moment before continuing with confidence, “Now we’ll still travel south on the official roads but we will not cross the river when we come to it. Instead we will travel east along the water until we reach the inlets. This is certainly not within the enemy’s expectations and they will have to come after us via the river crossing while we set up camp next to the river and wait for the enemy. This will greatly increase our chances of winning.”

Zha Yuanyu commented, “But that is not an easy route to travel on...” Wu Zhuo interrupted him, “As long as we can keep our lives, we will be able to overcome any difficult routes.” Cheng Xu agreed, “That’s decided then! We’ll increase the number of scouts who will keep a lookout on the front, back, left and right of the group. I’d rather travel slowly than to fall into a trap.”

After the decision was made, the large group continued on their journey. Xiang Shaolong personally chose a team of fit soldiers to be the scouts and they were separated into 5 in each team, with 2 teams each in front, at the back, the left and right, a total of 8 teams. They will use flags to signal to the main group once it’s safe. By dusk, they’re only a day’s journey away from

the river. They chose a high ground that is easy to defend but difficult to be attacked against to set up camp. Xiang Shaolong did not sleep at all last night so he took the opportunity to hide in the tent and have a good sleep. When he woke up the surroundings were in total darkness. Beneath the blanket he sniffed a fragrance and felt a soft body. He lit his lamp and saw that it was Lady Ya who was leaning against him fully clothed and sleeping. Lady Ya was awoken by the glare from the lamp and she complained, "You! Sleeping like a dead pig. It'll be terrible if there's an enemy attack." Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Are you the enemy?" He felt refreshed but extremely famished, before he remembered that he had not eaten. Lady Ya heard his tummy rumbling and laughed as she got up, "I came especially to send you your dinner, hai! It's all cold now."

Xiang Shaolong's mood was greatly improved and allowed this beauty who has always been served by others to serve him as he dine. By the time his stomach was full, it's already morning. They continued on the journey, following the official road down south towards the river, with lolling hills and woods surrounding them, the scenery breathtaking. Lady Pingyuan became a lot more cooperative and the carriage that was carrying her and her injured son traveled closely behind Zhao Qian's group while their 200 family warriors followed right at the back.

Ever since the conversation that morning, Xiang Shaolong has not spoken to this venomous woman. He wonders if she is thinking of any nefarious plot again. When he went past Zhao Qian's carriage, the pretty Zhao princess lifted up the curtain and called out daintily, "Xiang Shaolong!" Ever since they left Handan, this is the first time she initiated a talk with him. Xiang Shaolong was surprised. He slowed his horse down and traveled alongside the carriage.



He looked at her bright and pretty eyes and asked, “Princess, what instructions do you have!” Zhao Qian boldly looked at him in the eyes for a moment before lowering her head, “Xiang Shaolong! I’m very grateful to you, but I hate you as well.” She lowered the curtain as soon as she said this, cutting off his direct and greedy gaze.

Xiang Shaolong has mixed feelings. As a Casanova, of course he understood the hidden meaning in her words. By calling his name directly, it’s obvious that she is treating him as a man who can be a match to her royalty. She’s grateful to him because he protected her chastity but she hates him because he’s giving her away to the Weis. Although it’s an imperial decree that cannot be disobeyed, she can’t help but feel upset with him. Feeling dejected, Xiang Shaolong can only try to concentrate on the passing scenery.

In this world 2000 years ago, the world outside the cities still preserved an alluring primitive look. It not for the fact that winter is approaching, they’ll certainly see herds of animals strolling along the grasslands. This road is mainly along the lower hills or across flat open plains so although in the distance there were cliffs and mountains, dense forests and woods, the route they took is a quiet and peaceful road. They turned around a little hill and on their left a small lake as still as a mirror suddenly appeared. The water in the lake was jade green without any waves, serene and clear, and in the early morning fog it looked especially enchanting. On the opposite bank green hills lined the distance, with green bamboos and trees, looking very delicate. Xiang Shaolong secretly thought it a pity, if he is on a tour, he’ll certainly stay here for a few days. Even after they’ve left the little lake, the pretty scene was still etched deeply in his mind. But very soon he was attracted by another valley they passed.

There were unique looking cliffs in the valley, the rocks lined intricately, the forest dense and once in a while a strange animal would appear. A stream was flowing down the cliff and under the sunlight, the water and rocks seems to be moving, the illusion captivating. Xiang Shaolong suddenly had a strange thought, if Crazy Ma's time machine can really send people back to the past and present freely, then all he has to do is set up a tour agency and he'll be able to earn big bucks. As he went on imagining, his mood became better and by dusk, they finally reached the northern bank of the river. The scenery that appeared was enough to captivate a time traveler like him. He is the only one who understands that the damage done to earth 2000 years later can be so unacceptable. The river was about 60 odd meters wide, flowing between 2 huge rocks, with abundant weeds growing in the middle of the river. There was an unexplained beauty about the river.

Xiang Shaolong was totally engrossed with enjoying the scene until Cheng Xu reminded him and he gave the orders to set up camp next to the water. Without waiting for his instructions, Wu Zhuo had already sent someone to climb up the highest cliff to study the surroundings. On the surface, everything looks peaceful, and birds and animals would come and drink from the river occasionally, or even mingle around with their mules, enjoying the sweet river water. The camp he set up this time is the '6 petals camp', with the commander's tent and the ladies' tents, including Lady Pingyuan's right in the middle of the camp while the rest of the troops are split into 6 groups surrounding the central camp, like a flower with 6 petals. Naturally the circumference is still protected by the carriages joined together and the horses and mules were enclosed next to the river. By the time everything was settled, the sky is slowly getting darker and the various camps started their fires and smoke was seen everywhere. Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo and Cheng

Xu climbed up a huge rock to examine the happenings at the opposite bank.

They could hear the sounds of animals and birds fleeing in alarm from the woods on the opposite shore. The three of them exchanged glances and smiled, secretly thinking that they've had a close shave. Cheng Xu said, "Yuanyu will find some men and pretend to build rafts and let the thieves think that we will cross the river tomorrow morning." He continued with a bitter smile, "Tonight may be the last night of peace." Wu Zhuo said, "The thieves will surely have men hidden on this side as well. When we change our route tomorrow and head east along the river, will they give chase in a moment of anxiousness?" Xiang Shaolong smiled, "Wu Zhuo make a guess who could it be that's keeping an eye out for us at the bank opposite?" Without a thought Wu Zhuo replied, "Of course it's Hu Hui, they're the strongest amongst the horse thieves and has the capability of attacking us during the day. If it's Xiao Weimou, he would not dare to openly launch an attack with a thousand troops within the borders of Wei. At the most he will use the strategy of attacking at night or with fire." Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Knowing yourself and your enemy is the way of winning battles. This is the famous words of the great militarist Old Sun, so how can we let this opportunity to make him fall badly pass." Wu Zhuo and Cheng Xu's eyes immediately shone.

Xiang Shaolong continued, "Besides, we have an added advantage, Hu Hui does not know that we have an extra 100 elite soldiers. Just based on that we can make Hu Hui fall on his nose and when he breaths out, his beard would all be gray (hui = gray)." He lowered his voice and revealed his plan. Wu Zhuo and Cheng Wei were exclaiming how brilliant the plan was after they heard it. Xiang Shaolong asked offhandedly, "Why is it that we've traveled for a few

days but we don't even see a single Wei village, it's as if we're in no-man's land now." Cheng Xu replied, "This is the King of Wei's orders, the areas 50li around official roads are not to be inhabited, for fear that when enemies travel past the official roads, they can plunder the villages for food, women and men." Xiang Shaolong was enlightened and after going through the details of their mission a few more times, they returned to camp.

That night he had dinner at Lady Ya's tent and Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids served them happily. They even helped him bath and change and he was enjoying himself amongst the bevy of beauties so much that his weariness was all gone. While he was hugging Lady Ya and lying on the rug, she caressed his broad and muscular chest and said, "I really don't understand how you can predict that Prince Shaoyuan will launch a secret attack on Zhao Qian, and I don't understand why they'll want to do that?" Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before he came to a decision, and told her about him overhearing the conversation between Lady Pingyuan and her son. Lady Ya's pretty face turned pale on hearing this and the first thing she said was, "What a good Prince Xinling, to make me think that he's really missing me, so he's trying to harm me instead." Xiang Shaolong sighed, "You can't say that he does not miss you. If I really killed the King of Wei, won't you still end up being his?" Lady Ya was at a loss and asked while hugging him tightly, "What shall we do now?" Xiang Shaolong replied, "With me here, what do you have to fear? He has his plans of Zhang Liang\*, but I have wall ascending ladders, humph!"

Lady Ya furrowed her brows as she asked, "What is 'plans of Zhang Liang and wall ascending ladders'?" Only now did Xiang Shaolong remember that Zhang Liang was a person who appeared at the end of the Qin era and the

beginning of Han, so he's not born at this time yet. He was dumbfounded and laughed in reply, "Anyway this is called acting according to circumstances. As long as the Weis dare not out rightly make an enemy of us, I am confident of returning home with our lives." Lady Ya asked, "Why is Lady Pingyuan suddenly listening to you, it is because..." Xiang Shaolong slapped her butt warningly and said, "Don't let your thoughts wander. I just analyzed to her the situation." Lady Ya giggled, "Of course I believe you, Lady Pingyuan may be vicious but she's very uptight about relations between men and women. I just wonder if you can make her break her defenses? Don't forget that even Zhao Ni was unable to escape from your evil clutches!" Xiang Shaolong said honestly, "I did flirt with her a little. In order to survive, and under this major rule of thumb, I am willing to do anything."

Before he finished his words, Xiao Zhao came in and said, "Lady Pingyuan would like to invite Master Xiang over!" Lady Pingyuan was seated along in her tent, her hair piled high up in a bun and affixed with a gold hairpiece. She was wearing a long brocade outfit with light makeup on her face, looking absolutely radiant. Xiang Shaolong can't help but secretly compliment this woman for knowing how to dress up, mainly because she is a born clothes rack, and looks good in anything she wears. She must have been an alluring thing when she was young, a pity that she is so vicious. When she saw Xiang Shaolong arriving, she said nonchalantly, "Imperial Protector please take a seat!" Xiang Shaolong loves flirting with especially alluring women, and she still looks so young, so he smiled and said, "Can I sit anywhere?" Lady Pingyuan stared at him, "Imperial Protector, you are getting more and more discourteous with me." She stared at him fiercely again, as if reprimanding him for licking her earlobe the other day. Xiang Shaolong looked at her expression and knows that she is going to play along with his plan, thinking of

changing her strategy to a softer one to trap him. But he is not afraid at all. Matters between men and women are like playing with fire, and one can burn oneself if he's not careful. It's still an unknown whether Lady Pingyuan will really fall for him in the end. Xiang Shaolong is not willing to press her too hard so he went to her side and lied down. Lying on the soft rug, he stretched lazily and gave a satisfied sigh. Lady Pingyuan turned her head around and looked at Xiang Shaolong who was lying now next to her and asked coldly, "Xiang Shaolong! Stop playing games, what do you want?" Xiang Shaolong deliberately breathed in deeply twice and said, "Lady smells so nice!" There's nothing Lady Pingyuan can do to him, and suppressing the urge to slap him angrily, she said, "Answer me quickly!" Xiang Shaolong felt all these exchanges exciting and said, "Right now I only want one person, Lady should know who that person is?" Lady Pingyuan calmed down and nodded her head, "Fine! If you answer one question of mine, and if I find the answer satisfactory, I will make a guess who is the person you want."

A person of her status, by saying that is akin to agreeing to give her body to the other party. Xiang Shaolong has eavesdropped on her conversation with her son before and naturally knows that this woman has a sweet tongue but hidden daggers so he said with a smile, "Matters between men and women are not a transaction, so how can you lay down rules beforehand. Besides it's up to you to decide if my answer is satisfactory, so please forgive your subordinate for not accepting it." Lady Pingyuan's gaze turned glacier and stared at him, "Xiang Shaolong are you feeling guilty, that's why you don't even dare to answer a question?" Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that she should be the guilty one and said, "Who has no guilt? Those without guilt has gone to see the King of Hell a long time ago." Lady Pingyuan has lived most of her life as royalty, and now she is in an esteemed status so how can she

tolerate such behavior. She felt extremely unhappy, yet she also felt an excitement she's never felt before.

All along, she has always remained emotionless as she carried out her plans that can benefit her. She has always never cared much about relationships between men and women. When she married Prince Pingyuan, all she thought was the possibility of him replacing the King of Zhao. Marriage to her is just a transaction. Therefore she never allowed other men to flirt with her at all. This time she met the young and handsome Xiang Shaolong, and although she was a little attracted by his appearance, what moved her heart was his strong will and high handed ways as well as his unique charisma. Strangely it made her want to bow down to one stronger than her. And slowly but surely he is advancing towards her. Now she feels as if she cannot take it any more, and yet she feels greatly excited by it all. Such dilemma is making her feel lost. By now she has forgotten that Xiang Shaolong is only a useful pawn. Xiang Shaolong could tell that this is her only weakness, that's why he deliberately used such methods to deal with her. The 2 of them stared at each other, neither wanting to back down.

Xiang Shaolong feels no love towards her at all, but her high and mighty regal status as well as her radiant and mature outlook stirred up his lust. Of course mixed with it is a strong feeling of revenge. He felt that no matter what he does to this vicious woman, there's no need to be responsible for it. And her dangerous nature is in itself a very strong lure. He sat up and moved nearer, until he lightly touched Lady Pingyuan's untouchable pale arms and slender legs before he stopped. With less than 2 to 3 inches between them, he looked at her challengingly, looking at her eyes, which showed the conflict in her emotions. Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows tightly and said quietly,

“Xiang Shaolong! Aren’t you going too far?”, secretly hating that touch that made her lose all her senses. Although Xiang Shaolong has the intention to flirt with her, he understands that for women like her who think so highly of themselves, the most important thing is to know when to stop, and he must strip her of her defenses bit by bit. He stood up and said with a laugh, “It seems that Lady has not gathered the courage to accept real happiness.” And he left the tent.

Lady Pingyuan jumped up and cried out daintily, “Xiang Shaolong!” Xiang Shaolong stopped in his steps and turned around, his heated eyes roaming about her body a few times before asking respectfully, “Does Lady has any instructions?” Lady Pingyuan stamped her feet and said, “You have not answered my question, I won’t allow you to leave, or else just you wait and see what will happen when we reach Daliang.” Xiang Shaolong walked towards her, his gaze and smile filled with conquering her. Lady Pingyuan was at a loss and actually took 3 steps back and for the first time revealed the weakness of a lady. Xiang Shaolong almost touched her bosom before he stopped, and reaching out his steady and strong hand, caught hold of her chin and forced her to look up at him. The skin under his fingers felt extremely tender. The light wrinkles around her eyes became a strange lure instead. Lady Pingyuan’s hands was clasped tightly around her sleeves, her breathing quickening, the fragrance blowing directly on the other party’s face. She very much wanted to close her eyes but she knows that once she do that, the other party will take a further step forward in her molestation. At this point in time she still finds it difficult to accept the idea although her physical reactions tell of a different thing altogether. She deliberately thought of how he injured her son, but still she can’t find the heart to hate this man. In fact she felt the strong pressure exerted by the other party.



Xiang Shaolong said gently, "Lady just ask! If I answer you honestly, Lady must allow me a kiss and you must not try to deny me that."

Lady Pingyuan's heart thumped wildly and she felt at a loss as well as extremely furious. However her body seemed to be leaning forward so she lifted her slender hand and pushed against his muscular chest but the other party did not move at all. Xiang Shaolong felt the excitement of taking advantage of a superior and released his hold on her chin, changing to grab her tender hands, which besides the dead Prince Pingyuan, no one else has touched before. He first forced her hands down and pushed it behind her before hugging her, sticking close to her thighs. Lady Pingyuan moaned quietly, her voluptuous body immediately leaned into him, pressing against him totally. Xiang Shaolong was afraid that she might not be able to take the excitement so he distracted her by saying, "Speak! Xiang Shaolong am all ears." Lady Pingyuan's body trembled and like a frightened bird struggled for a moment but of course this did nothing to change the situation. She lifted her head and looked at Xiang Shaolong, stammering, "What are you doing?"

Xiang Shaolong suppressed the urge to squeeze her and said, "If Lady is not going to ask the question, I am going to leave." Lady Pingyuan could not withstand it any longer and with a groan, collapsed limply against him and uttered, "Xiang Shaolong! I want you to tell me, why were you able to set up a trap to harm my son?" Xiang Shaolong had long guessed that she is going to ask this same question as Lady Ya, and with Lady Pingyuan's intellect she will certainly suspect that he has overheard their conversation. Then that would mean their other plans to deal with Xiang Shaolong has been revealed as well. If she does not clarify this point, how can she lure him. He was secretly cursing that this woman is ultimately still trying to cause him his death. He

thought that no matter how interested she is in him, it would never be greater than her thirst for power. He smiled and said, “The person I wanted to deal with is not your son at all, it’s just that the man I placed in a secret location realized there are outsiders nearby and their numbers are not large, so I guessed they might be planning something against Princess. I just did not expect Young Master to be involved in this as well!”

This is a very good reply, and very reasonable as well. Because Wu Zhuo’s men are elite soldiers that Lady Pingyuan did not expect. Lady Pingyuan was relieved and her fake composure returned. She lifted her pretty face and was about to say something when Xiang Shaolong’s mouth pressed down, sealing her sweet lips. If Xiang Shaolong does not know about her evil plots, he will never touch even a hair on the mother of his enemy. Because he’s afraid he’ll be entangled in a messy relationship. But now it’s a game of plotting against each other, each using their own tricks, so there’s no emotional barrier at all. Instead, he felt the joy and excitement of taking advantage of his enemy’s mother as revenge. Her body is still filled with life and suppleness, and doesn’t feel old at all. Under the flirting of his lips and tongue, Lady Pingyuan’s reactions started to heat up. At the most intoxicating and exciting moment, Xiang Shaolong released his hold on her sweet lips, hands and body, moved back and with a bow, said with a smile, “Thank you Lady for your favor.” He ignored her silent look asking him to stay and left the tent. But he could still smell the fragrance of her body.

## Chapter 5

### Fighting off enemies at the river

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Xiang Shaolong and Wu Zhuo's 100 men, with strong bows in their hands, lied low in a dense forest about a hundred steps away from the camp, looking at the slowly leaving troops in the gradually brightening sky.

When the sky was bright, Cheng Xu's men has already disappeared around the bend at the lower stream.

After a moment, sounds of hooves and men talking were heard on both sides of the river.

A group of almost 400 horse thieves rode out from a dense forest at the upper stream while on the opposite bank a large group of surprised thieves ran out. One of them was sitting high atop a horse, with a wave of long and coarse gray beard, and he is indeed the most famous horse thief roaming the Zhao borders, Hu Hui.

He was so furious his eyeballs were almost bulging out and kept hurrying his men to move the rafts for crossing the river out from the hiding place so that they can go after their enemies. Obviously they have lost their footing.

Sounds of hooves were heard, the horse thieves on this side of the river are already riding hard along the river.

The horse thieves on the other side are starting to cross the river.

Xiang Shaolong took a peek at Wu Zhuo and saw that in this dangerous and tense situation, he still maintained his cool and was secretly impressed.

20 odd wooden rafts, with war horses and other equipment on it, came crossing the river.

When Hu Hui's men ferried 2 batches of close to 400 warhorses and rations, they began to ferry the men across the river.

Hu Hui was on one of the wooden rafts.

By now, on this side of the river there were only about 50 to 60 horse thieves and totally unwary as they were busy moving the horses to the flat plains next to the river bank.

Xiang Shaolong gave a hand signal and a hundred odd men released a wave of arrows from the dense forest, causing chaos amongst the enemy and the horses and more than half their men were taken down.

Hu Hui and the rest were panicking as they hurriedly cocked their arrows to return fire. The small group of soldiers left on the bank screamed and scattered in all directions.

Xiang Shaolong and his men have by now moved behind the rocks next to the bank and the sound of bows clanging were heard as the light arrows flew like locusts towards the horse thieves on the rafts who had nothing to cover

them at all.

There was no way the horse thieves could avoid the arrows and fresh blood stained the rafts and river red.

Hu Hui hurriedly gave orders to retreat to the opposite bank.

Everyone aimed at him and a flurry of arrows flew towards this obvious target.

Although the horse thieves held the wooden oars high up, they were unable to block the hundreds of arrows and fell one by one.

Hu Hui saw that the situation was amiss and with an angry roar, jumped into the water and hid under the wooden raft.

The other thieves copied his move and all jumped into the water.

There were about 200 horse thieves still on the opposite bank but besides jumping and shouting, there's nothing they can do as well.

The light arrows shot into the water, fresh blood kept bubbling up from the water, followed by bodies floating up. The scene looked totally brutal.

It's either you perish or I'll die, this has always been a rock hard fact in wars.

The wooden rafts were broken and the pieces flowed downstream.

Xiang Shaolong was worried about the situation at Cheng Xu's side so he gave the orders to retreat, ignoring whether Hu Hui was dead or alive. They went up the warhorses they stole and led the horses equipped with rations downstream.

By now the battle at Cheng Xu's side is coming to an end as well.

When they reached a suitable site downstream, they used the carriages as a line of defense and Zha Yuanyu also led 400 men and spread out around the dense woods nearby, waiting for the pursuing thieves.

400 horse thieves came rushing along the river and they had just turned the corner when they saw the waiting Zhao soldiers but by then they have already fallen within shooting distance of the hiding soldiers. Just as they were at a loss whether to advance or retreat, the Zhao soldiers who were under cover behind the carriages let out a volley of arrows together and immediately men and horses felled.

The remaining men were unable to retreat in time and when they were thinking of going around the carriages via the side stream, Zha Yuanyu and his 400 hidden soldiers shot at them, causing total chaos among them.

As they hurriedly retreated, they bumped into Xiang Shaolong's reinforcements and was caught totally unawares. Less than 50 managed to escape by abandoning their horses and gear, running into the woods next to the bank.

Under this great victory, all the soldiers cheered, even those from the

Pingyuan family shared this victorious atmosphere.

On Xiang Shaolong's side only 40 odd men were injured, but none of the injuries serious. The outcome was something to be proud of and once again it proved that Xiang Shaolong has an excellent military mind and flexible and effective ways of warring.

Xiang Shaolong sent 20 men to send the 300 odd warhorses they captured back to Zhao, but kept the weapons and rations for his own use. After tending to the injured soldiers, they continued to travel west along the river.

By the time they pitched tents at dusk, they're only about two and a half days away from the inner river.

Because the road along the journey was uneven and they've just had a short skirmish, the men and horses were all tired. Everyone was trying to get as much rest as possible and no one was talking throughout the night. Early the next morning they continued on their journey.

The scenery changed again, the mountains rose and fell in the distance, the trees and grass grew lushly and everything looked like a painting. Streams flowed between the mountains, with waterfalls, captivating one's eyes.

At the side is a huge and primitive forest with gigantic trees that even a few strong men holding hands won't be able to go around its circumference.

Sounds of animals and insects could be heard coming from the forest, and the Zhao soldiers hunted some wild foxes and rabbits on the way to add to

their dinner.

Sometimes they will come to a high point and from there they can see the unending plains and forests.

Once in a while they will see an isolated village or farm amongst the tall grass and to Xiang Shaolong, everywhere he looks seems to be a paradise. He does not understand why humans still want to fight, and can only blame it on their inherent greed and evil nature.

Although the scenery is beautiful, the journey was arduous. Not only they need to manually open up a path, many times they have to use tree trunks to pave the roads before they can travel in between the streams.

They traveled less than 10li the whole day, and in the end set up camp at the top of a hill.

Although they were tired, the soldiers were all in high spirits, and very willing to carry out any orders from Xiang Shaolong.

Beauties will always love heroes, so Lady Ya is all the more conceding towards him, letting him enjoy the gentleness of this exceptional creature.

Ever since Zhao Qian spoke to him that day through the window, she has been consciously avoiding him. He has no choice but to allow this situation to continue and did not make any moves to break this stalemate.

After his meal, Lady Pingyuan sent someone to invite him over again, saying



there's something to discuss.

Xiang Shaolong was also curious as to her present attitude, so he hurriedly went to Lady Pingyuan's private tent.

Who would have expected that Lady Pingyuan would put 2 family warriors in her tent, and he was greatly disappointed, all naughty thoughts disappeared totally.

His relationship with Lady Pingyuan is truly a battle of wills between the 2 sexes. It gave him a feeling of committing something wrong, which gives him a stronger feeling of excitement.

Besides, which man would not like new and fresh things, much less a flirtatious man like Xiang Shaolong.

Lady Pingyuan was sitting on the floor rug with her guards up and after inviting him for a seat, she stared at him angrily and said, "This time we should be able to have a proper conversation!"

Naturally Xiang Shaolong understood her meaning. He was secretly feeling irritated but on the surface he had no choice but to say respectfully, "Lady please give your instructions!"

Lady Pingyuan stared at him again, a look filled with hate and love, but she said icily, "Now that we're far away from the main road, where are we going actually?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, “The journey has been difficult, Lady must have suffered. We are going to the river’s inlets first, before following the river towards Daliang.”

Lady Pingyuan suddenly sighed and leaned a little closer, saying quietly, “If you... I can make them leave.”

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic and hurriedly nodded his head in agreement.

Lady Pingyuan dismissed the 2 guards and after staring at him for a moment, she said after some thought, “You really are an exceptionally rare talent. Now no one will disbelieve that you once fought off Hu Hui’s 800 horse thieves with 50 men.”

Xiang Shaolong smiled, “The horse thieves are just a motley crew of men, and it’s easy to win them.”

Lady Pingyuan shook her head, “Some people are born leaders, not only can they make warriors work for them, they can also emerge victorious with their soldiers, never losing. You are one such person.”

Xiang Shaolong has no idea what she is up to again, so he can only humbly accept the compliments.

Lady Pingyuan’s pretty face suddenly blushed and she lowered her head and said, “After passing the river inlets, and about 20 day’s journey towards the southeast, you will reach Pushui, and if continue south down the river, you will reach Fengqiu in 10 days. That city’s general Guan Po is my man, we’ll be

out of danger once we reach that place.”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “Your subordinate will definitely follow Lady’s instructions.” He added curiously, “Why is Lady’s tender and smooth face suddenly blushing?”

Lady Pingyuan blushed all the way to her neck and said, “Are you back to your old ways again? Now scram.”

Xiang Shaolong saw that she was embarrassed and he felt pleased. He got up with a grin and with a bow, said, “Your subordinate takes his leave!” But his feet seems to have taken root and did not move at all.

Of course Lady Pingyuan doesn’t really mean to chase him away and seeing that his legs are not moving at all, she asked happily, “Why aren’t you leaving yet?”

Xiang Shaolong smiled evilly, “Isn’t Lady going to give your subordinate a little reward?”

Lady Pingyuan was feeling utterly confused, and after looking at him for a moment, lowered her pretty face.

Xiang Shaolong walked over and knelt down behind her. His hands reached out and with a little pull, this regal lady fell into his arms weakly and once again he managed to enjoy her sweet lips.

This time Xiang Shaolong took it a step further, his 2 hands caressed her

bosom.

Lady Pingyuan's body shook violently as she held his evil-doing hands in a death grip and moaned daintily, "Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong understands very well that the most precious thing is something that cannot be obtained. By luring her bit by bit, is the best way to ensure that she won't be able to harden her heart to harm him after they reach Daliang. So he stopped moving his hands and after having his fill of kissing her, he left, leaving this beautiful woman to spend the lonely night alone.

For the next 20 odd days, they continued traveling east and passed the inner river and the west river. They passed one of the big cities in Wei, Puyang but did not enter it, choosing to travel south on the official road from Puyang directly to Pushui.

After passing these few days in peace, their scouts once again found traces of their enemies scout, making them aware that danger is once again looming.

They have lots of carriages and horses, and have to repair those faulty carriages often so their pace is as slow as a snail. There's no way they can throw the enemies off their back so they can only pray that these nameless enemies will not be as formidable as Hu Hui.

By now they are close to Daliang, and there are many official stops along the official road and every 10 li or so they will see the Weis military barracks.

The attitude of the Wei soldiers was strange. After looking at their documents, although they did not try to make things difficult, but they refused to send troops to escort them, so when they reached the end of the official road, they have no choice but to travel east towards Pushui.

3 days later they left the mountain track and reached a large grassy plains on the western bank of Pushui but they need to travel another 2 days before they can reach Pushui.

The huge group stopped at the side of the grass plains.

Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo, Cheng Xu and Zha Yuanyu walked to a side for some discussion, their expressions all somber.

Wu Zhuo said, "The enemies are now aware of our route and military strength but we have no information at all on the enemies that may attack us, which is the biggest fault in military with the enemy in the dark and us in the open."

Cheng Xu continued, "If the enemies were to attack, they'll surely do it within these 2 days, because on such flat plains, it's easier to attack than to defend. The enemies will definitely not miss such a good opportunity." He continued with a bitter smile, "What I'm most afraid is the King of Wei will order his soldiers to disguise themselves as horse thieves and attack us, then we'll be in very big trouble."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows and after thinking hard for a moment, said, "This possibility that Cheng Xu has raised, could very well become a fact."

Since that is the case, we cannot just sit and wait for death.”

The 3 of them were all ears as they waited to hear what miraculous plan this brilliant strategist has to save their lives.

Xiang Shaolong said quietly, “We might as well find a sturdy and highland around here with a mountain backing us and start setting up tents and ditches, store up on wild meat and spring water and stay here for half a month or so. On the other hand we’ll send out light cavalry to make their way towards Fengqiu, and beg the defending general Guan Po to send reinforcements. So even if the King of Wei has other nefarious plans, there’s nothing he can do.”

After much hard thinking, everyone decided this is the best plan they can come up with for a desperate situation.

Immediately after that Xiang Shaolong went to look for Lady Pingyuan to discuss the plan and through the bamboo curtains, he told her of the plan and the reason. Lady Pingyuan said quietly, “You’re more experienced than me in this area, you shall decide on everything.”

Xiang Shaolong has never heard her speak so gently and so obediently towards him before and he felt lust arising, so he asked, “Would Lady like me to visit you tonight?”

Lady Pingyuan sighed, “Shall we talk about this after we’ve reached Daliang? My son is already very unhappy that I was alone with you on a few occasions, and now that he is slowly recovering, I don’t want him to get upset over us.”

Xiang Shaolong thought of Prince Shaoyuan and his mood disappeared. He left her carriage and went to inform Lady Ya of the plan and told her to convey the message to Zhao Qian.

After scouting for half a day, they finally find a flat piece of highland with a mountain backing at a stream next to the plains and started setting up camp.

The whole army began busying themselves and at the same time they sent out 20 light cavalry carrying Lady Pingyuan's handwritten letter with her seal and went to Fengqiu via 10 different routes to ask for assistance.

The process of setting up camp this time is vastly different when compared to the past, with ditches being the main form of defense.

Along the circumference of the highland they dug ditches one foot deep and five feet wide. The soil that was dug out was piled in front of the ditches and stones were added, making it into a short mud wall about half a foot high, with holes in it for the usage of bows and arrows and it was quite sturdy. They then pushed the carts along the inner circle of the wall to fortify the wall against the force of the enemy's attacks.

Outside of the short wall, the slope was filled with sharpened bamboo stakes and holes to trip the horses. There was danger everywhere to deal with the strong attacks of the enemy.

The long grass and woods surrounding the area were removed to prevent enemies from taking cover amongst them.

The camp itself was set up according to how it's usually done, in the shape of a crescent moon, with the main tents in the middle and the 6 armies split into both sides, forming a half circle with the front protruding out. The camp and the short wall was more than 3 feet apart so unless the wall has been taken over, the camp will be out of reach of the enemy's projectiles.

After busying themselves for 3 days, they've finally made the camp into one strong in defenses with the ditch on the outside, a rampart on the inside and pikes and holes outside the walls.

In order to prevent the enemy from using fire to attack, Xiang Shaolong dug ditches to connect the stream behind them into the camp. By the time everything was done, 5 days has passed.

That day when Xiang Shaolong was instructing his men to set aside rocks collected from the slope, the scouts returned to report that they found a group of horse thieves close to 10,000 in strength rushing through the flat plains.

Everyone understood in their hearts that this must be the enemy that has been waiting for them a long time in the plains without avail, therefore they could not take it any longer and has come to attack them directly.

And this also proved that their guess was correct. No one will believe that there are no Wei soldiers mixed into the group of enemy.

Although they know that to be the truth, they're still not sure why the King of Wei would want to be so ruthless, and the only explanation is that Prince



Xinling is indeed a threat to his throne and he's thinking of using this to spoil the relations between Prince Xinling and the Zhaos. As for any other reasons, it something that they will not know. But the King of Wei is well known for being a useless king, so no one will find it strange that he'll actually do something so ridiculous.

The night passed peacefully and the next day, Xiang Shaolong instructed that besides the soldiers on duty, everyone else were to rest so that they can conserve their energy to deal with the enemy's attack.

Luckily they have kept a large amount of weapons, rations and arrows from Hui Hu and it's enough for them to stay besieged for half a month without having to worry about food and arrows.

Another advantage they have is that the enemy will not expect them to build a barricade so reasonably speaking they would not have brought equipment that can deal with barricades, so it will make their job defending much easier.

At dusk, the horse thieves could be seen appearing on the plains and they even set up camp. Obviously there's going to be a standoff between the 2 armies.

Xiang Shaolong scrutinized his enemy and exclaimed hoarsely, "Look! Isn't that Hu Hui?"

The others strained their eyes and saw a group of horse thieves riding nearer towards them, and the one leading them is indeed Hu Hui.

Cheng Xu exclaimed furiously, “From what is seen, Hu Hui does belong to the King of Wei and those horse thieves are Wei soldiers in disguise. Their job is to disrupt other state’s financial and political stability. The Weis are really vicious!”

Zha Yuanyu shook his head and sighed, “I really do not understand why his Majesty would want to marry our prettiest princess to the Weis.”

Cheng Xu warned him, “You’d better be careful with your words, if this goes to his Majesty’s ears, you and your tribe will all be in big trouble.”

Zha Yuanyu smiled bitterly, “Let’s talk about it after we survive tonight!”

Xiang Shaolong knows that he has seen that the number of horse thieves are almost 10 times more than their troops and was feeling afraid. From that he can deduce that the others will feel the same as well and morale will definitely be affected. He furrowed his brow and came up with a plan. He told Cheng Xu, “Prepare a round of fire arrows for me, I might be using them tonight.”

After he spoke, he returned to his tent, ignoring their querying looks. He collected his tools and walked towards the back of the camp.

At the area between the camp and the back of the mountain, the mules and horses were separated into 2 huge wooden enclosures, leisurely drinking the clear water redirected from the stream and nibbling on the green grass.

Luckily this is only the beginning of winter, or those animals would be in big

trouble if there's a huge snowstorm.

He lifted his head and studied closely the layout and shape of the cliffs and the nearby mountains and with the metal hooks, easily climbed up. He used a hammer to install the climbing rings that Guo Zhong made for him at the appropriate spots, moving towards the next mountain and attached a rough rope before climbing back to camp. As long as he can climb over the neighboring mountain, he can easily use this 'secret route' the drop down to the plains dozen of feet below and proceed with his secret mission.

By the time he returned to the commander's tent, Cheng Xu came running towards him anxiously and said, "Come and take a look quickly!"

When he returned to the frontline, he saw that the horse thieves at the bottom were all at work, cutting down trees and putting a pile of sharpened stakes about a foot long on the ground in a row.

Wu Zhuo furrowed his brows and asked, "What are they trying to do?"

Xiang Shaolong has an idea on what it could be and exclaimed, "Those are the tools for attacking our mud city. They just have to line those trunks in a row on the slope, then they need not fear the attack from our arrows and rocks."

Zha Yuanyu exclaimed, "This is a very effective move, they just need to have 3 rows of these together front and back, they need not fear even rolling rocks. Also, this would block our view of them and we won't be able to see what they're planning."

Wu Zhuo laughed icily, “If they want to defeat this thing, they would first have to pay a horrible price.” He continued with a sigh, “If only their strength was halved.”

What he meant was that, even if they sacrificed a lot of men, the remaining strength would still be enough to overrun and enter their barricades.

Xiang Shaolong laughed, “Don’t worry! The enemy made a biggest mistake, and that is to belittle their opponent. Look at their camp, there’s no defenses at all. The rations and horses are just abandoned behind there. If we can give them a good fire, their expressions will be very interesting to watch!”

Wu Zhuo and the rest furrowed their brows, looking at the packed thieves on the small hill below and secretly thought that it’s not them who belittle their opponent, but even a rat will find it difficult to slip out and set a fire to their camp.

Xiang Shaolong just smiled and did not explain any further. He returned to his tent for a rest.

After sleeping for 4 hours, it was dusk by the time he woke up. Lady Ya was waiting there quietly to have dinner with him.

Xiang Shaolong sat up feeling refreshed and after freshening up, he ate 3 big bowls of rice.

Lady Ya looked at him curiously, “It seems that you’re very confident, or else you won’t be so excited and in high spirits? But I cannot think of why you

would still be so confident of defeating the enemy this time.”

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and laughed, “Is Ya’er afraid?”

Lady Ya happily kissed him before saying with a smile, “I really am a little afraid without you around, but after seeing you, I’m suddenly fearless. That’s right! Go over to Zhao Qian’s place! She said there’s something she would like to beg of you.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that Zhao Qian is a bigger headache to him compared to the horse thieves.

After this pretty Third Princess dismissed her maids, she came to his side and said shyly, “Xiang Shaolong, can Zhao Qian borrow something from you?”

Xiang Shaolong was asked curiously, “What do you want to borrow?”

Zhao Qian suddenly opened her fair and tender palm and said quietly, “I want your personal dagger which you carry at all times.”

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed, “Do you have so little confident in me? I will definitely send you to Daliang.”

Zhao Qian’s pretty eyes reddened and she stared at him with sadness and hatred before saying, “Zhao Qian does not want you to bring her to Daliang. Everywhere else is fine, but not to Daliang.”

No words other than these can so clearly express the love she felt for Xiang

Shaolong.

Hot blood rushed up Xiang Shaolong's veins and he blurted, "Fine! I promise you, even if I bring you to Daliang, I'll have a way to bring you back to Zhao whole and unblemished."

Zhao Qian was shocked, "Really!"

Xiang Shaolong can feel her pretty face light up, filled with hope and he gritted his teeth and replied, "This is a promise!"

After saying this sentence, he felt himself lightening up.

In truth, every since he found out the complicated situation in the Wei royal family, and knowing that the King of Zhao is going to steal the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', he felt that he cannot be the accomplice that helps to sacrifice Zhao Qian's lifelong happiness. Now that he has expressed his stand, that feeling is so great.

Zhao Qian was ecstatic, "Shaolong! Qian'er is really very grateful to you!"

Xiang Shaolong saw that her confidence in him is so much greater than his confidence in himself and felt happy about it. He took out his dagger and shoved it into her tiny hand, taking the chance to hold her soft hands and said, "Unless it's the last choice available, you must not kill yourself with this dagger."

Zhao Qian blushed to her neck and held this love token tightly against her

chest. She lowered her head and said with love, “Qian’er will listen to Shaolong’s instructions.”

Xiang Shaolong was captivated and was thinking of taking the opportunity to go a little further when the sounds of drums were heard coming from the foot of the mountain.

Looking at the situation at the foot of the mountain, the expression on Cheng Xu and the rest were ashen. Only Wu Zhuo maintained a calm composure.

The thieves had successfully lined the ground with rows of wooden stakes about 2 feet wide and surrounded all routes of escape at the foot of the mountain.

There’s only a small gap in between the tied wooden stakes, only wide enough to allow a single person to pass, and he won’t be able to go through if he’s on a horse.

Lanterns were hung on the top of the stakes, illuminating the slope clearly.

Beyond the wooden stakes about 2000 horse thieves gathered, the 200 men at the forefront carrying a huge wooden shield as tall as a man, its ends pointed so that it can be driven into the ground too help block the attacks from falling rocks.

Another 200 odd men carried tools like shovels and hoes and it seems that they are first going to remove the obstructions along the slope and fill up the ditches filled with sharp stakes. Following behind them are 500 archers

holding strong bows, and after them came the troops holding long halberds, spears, etc. The formation looked majestic and sends a chill down their spines.

Hui Hu and a few men who looked like leaders were sitting atop their horses, making pointing actions towards them, obviously discussing their plans of attack.

Wu Zhuo pointed to a burly man, who looks like a wolf, next to Hui Hu and said, "That man is called 'Wolfman' Li Ao, a famous horse thief who frequents the border along the State of Han. His fame is on par with Hui Hu, and I did not expect that he also belongs to the King of Wei."

Xiang Shaolong commented, "So it seems that this 10,000 strong troop is made up of different groups of horse thieves, but they're all men sent by the King of Wei. Humph! I think I understand now, the King of Wei is dealing with us so as to give Prince Xinling a hard blow, but also because there's a personal grudge involved. Because I once killed a large group of Hui Hu's men." He suddenly realized, no wonder at that time Dou Liang would secretly leak news to Hui Hu, and ask Hui Hu to come and steal the horses and women. It's because they are all spies sent by the King of Wei to stir up trouble at the Zhao border.

Cheng Xu said, "It seems that they will take turns and attack us relentlessly day and night. This will be a long battle which will see who weakens first."

Zha Yuanyu heaved a cold sigh and said, "Even if reinforcements were to come immediately upon hearing the news, it'll still take at least 15 days. I'm



afraid we can't even hold them off for 3 days, who would have expect them to be so strong?"

The sounds of drums were heard.

A string of men carrying shields came out from the tiny gaps between the rows of wooden stakes and lined up neatly in front, followed by the soldiers with tools and the archers.

Xiang Shaolong saw that the sky is getting dark and after asking Cheng Xu for the bag of fire arrows that has been wrapped in oiled cloth, instructed them, "All of you will be in charge of defenses here. I'll go behind enemy lines to burn their rations and chase their horses away, let's see what great they can still do after that?"

Everyone looked at him in shock, not comprehending how he is going to make his way to the enemy camp.

## Chapter 6

### Defeating the enemy's army

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Xiang Shaolong returned to camp and changed into his black outfit, strapped on the belt containing his needles and the equipment used for mountain climbing, carried the bows and arrows on his back and after kissing Lady Ya and bidding his farewell to the maids, he left towards the back of the camp.

He passed by Zhao Qian's tent and he can't help but stand outside the entrance of the tent and called out, "Princess!"

The tempo of the drums became more and more frantic, which means that the enemy is going to launch an attack soon.

"Boom, boom, boom..."

Beat by beat, it sounds like the calls of the grim reaper, the sounds going straight into the deepest corner of the souls of everyone on the battlefield.

Zhao Qian could have been thinking about Xiang Shaolong at that time, and upon hearing his voice, she lifted the flap of her tent in surprise and cried out, "Shaolong! What are you doing here? Hey!" Her pretty eyes noticed his black outfit.

Xiang Shaolong looked that this young girl as pretty as Wu Tingfang, looking at her pure, innocent and refreshing face and the feelings that he has been

trying to keep suppressed rushed up and he said with a smile, “I am now going on a deadly mission to deal with the enemy, isn’t Princess going to give me some encouragement?”

Zhao Qian was startled and her pretty eyes revealed her fear and excitement. She lifted her pretty face gently, pouted her lips and quietly waited for the arrival of her first kiss and happiness without any apprehension at all but her dainty and pert bosom was heaving quickly.

Next to the camp there were suddenly war cries.

The enemy has started to make their way up the slope.

But nothing entered the ears of Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian, they were totally lost in that feeling of closeness, drunk in the soul wrenching proximity.

The sounds of battle cries and arrows flying broke the silent night and fell and rose like waves.

Xiang Shaolong released Zhao Qian and said with a smile, “With this kiss! I, Xiang Shaolong, will have the confidence to protect Princess until the end of time.”

While Zhao Qian was still feeling intoxicated, Xiang Shaolong has already disappeared into the darkness of the night.

The northern wind blew.

Xiang Shaolong used all the skills he's learnt and based purely on his memory and feel, climbed up the steep cliff using the rope he had tied earlier. He quietly landed himself behind the enemy and made his way silently towards the enemy camp.

He once received the strictest military training of the 21st century and such night sabotages is but child's play to him.

Without his armor to weigh him down, he was like a bird that found wings. He moved silently and speedily like a civet cat and was soon at the back of the enemy.

The thieves set up their camp according to the 'square formation', with 5 squares from the inside to the outside.

The tents containing the rations were at the furthest back, followed by 2 large enclosures where hundreds of warhorses were kept.

The situation over at the other side was getting more and more intense but the situation at the enemy's camp here is peaceful, quiet and dimly lit. It seems that for the thieves whose turn is not up for their attack is trying to gather as much rest as possible.

Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself, and thought that he can guarantee that they will not have a good night's sleep tonight, but they will have a cruel nightmare which has come to life.

He observed closely and found that the security at the enemy camp was lax,

and some of the soldiers on guard duty were even sitting on the ground and nodding off.

When he went to the horse enclosure, he felt it even more hilarious. It turns out that the 12 men on night duty were gambling happily in a circle, as if they're totally unaware of the intense situation over at the battlefield.

As soon as he gets rid of these 12 thieves, he'll be able to set fire to the rations tent.

The problem is, how can he kill these 12 soldiers who are experienced in battle and not let a single one escape?

Xiang Shaolong cracked his head over this.

Right at this time one of the men walked towards him.

Xiang Shaolong was initially shocked, luckily he saw that the man was loosening his pants as he walked and he realized what the other party was going to do so he hurriedly hid behind a tree.

That person just stepped into the woods when there's a flash of dagger, he felt a coldness at his throat and was dead immediately.

Xiang Shaolong kept his Flying Rainbow, removed that person's outer armor and wore it. He swaggered out until he was behind 2 of the men and reached out to grab their heads and banged it hard against each other. His palms reached out and with lightning speed chopped at another 2 men's neck.

His moves were smooth and swift and only when the 4 fell to the ground did the other 7 thieves realize what has happened.

The dagger flashed. With the Flying Rainbow in his hand, Xiang Shaolong leapt up and landed on the rock that they had been using as a gambling table and slashed the throats of 3 men.

“Bang!”

He kicked his leg and it landed on the side of one of the men’s face, who had just drew his sword. The man fainted.

The remaining 3 thieves were terrified and escaped in 2 different directions.

Xiang Shaolong secretly laughed to himself and Flying Rainbow flew from his hand, stabbing and killing one of the man in his back.

The other 2 saw that he has lost his weapon so they drew their sword and came running back.

Xiang Shaolong reached towards his waist and pulled out 2 flying needles and with a flick of his wrist, the needles flew out like lightning, aiming at the spot between the men’s brows.

By the time their bodies touch the ground, Xiang Shaolong has already picked up Flying Rainbow and disappeared into the darkness.

The battle cries were even more intense now.

Sounds of rocks and stones landing were heard, obviously the enemy is near the top of the slope and Cheng Xu and the rest had no choice but to release the rocks to attack the enemy making their way up.

By now Xiang Shaolong has successfully destroyed the horse enclosure at the back and he hurriedly removed his bow and made his way past the horses nearer to where the rations are kept.

Looking at the enemy's camp from this angle, he happened to see that at the outermost area furthest back about 3 feet away there were a row of 20 odd tents, with a lamp hung outside each of the tent, shaking in the northerly wind. The camp was deserted with only a few guards on night duty who were dozing off, security was extremely lax.

They can't really be blamed, for this is place is behind all their troops and they thought that Xiang Shaolong's men were all heavily surrounded far away, that's why they were careless.

This morning Xiang Shaolong had made use of his high vantage view and saw clearly that the 40 odd tents at the last 2 rows were used to store rations, saving him the trouble of having to scout around.

The camp's back was facing the south, the northern wind is blowing right now. So if he can successfully set fire to the rations at the southern end and if the fire were to follow the direction of the wind, he may very well cause the rest of the camp to be on fire very quickly, especially when the inside of the camp is full of wild grass. It may become a huge fire that no one can deal with.

After he made up his mind, Xiang Shaolong knelt down with one knee on the ground and lit the arrows first before shooting it towards the ration tent nearest to him. He chose the tent right at the back of the camp, so unless the smoke was very thick, the enemy will not find out about the fire so soon.

After setting fire to the tents at the outer area, he set fire to the horses grains inside the horse enclosure. He found one exceptionally strong warhorse with stirrups and led it around the camp through the dense woods at the side, towards the middle of the camp.

By now the northern side of the camp is thick with smoke and flames could be seen and a few alert guards have started crying out to others to put out the fire and were rushing towards the fire.

What made the thieves even more panicky were the nervous neighs and trampling of the warhorses, and for a moment the whole camp was in chaos.

Xiang Shaolong rode the horse and at the same time continued shooting fire arrows along the perimeter of the camp. As long as the perimeter of the camp is on fire, those in deep sleep inside the tents can forget about escaping the fire.

While everyone's attention was focused on the intense fire at the northern end, he wore the thief's armor again and walked boldly across the camp towards the perimeter on the other side.

The thieves' camp is in a mess. The troops were trying to get as much rest as possible before they start the next shift of attack but they are now scurrying



out of the tents sleepy-eyed and still in a daze about their surroundings.

Some even thought enemies have attacked them and came running out with their weapons and armor in disarray.

Everywhere else there were scurrying and panicky soldiers.

Sound of hooves were heard from the northern end. Obviously the warhorses are in shock and running towards the plains.

Xiang Shaolong rode past but no one suspected him at all. Some even called out to him as he's the only person to have a horse to run after the escaped horses.

Xiang Shaolong called out a reply and turned a circle, still running towards the perimeter on the other side. By now the tents at the side along the back were embroiled in the fire and the fire engulfed the surrounding trees and grass, adding fuel to the rapidly spreading fire.

He had used up his arrows so he might as well throw away his bow and pulled out his Flying Rainbow instead. He toppled every lantern that he saw and when the oil lamps dropped to the ground, the flames started immediately and it's even more effective than the arrows.

He heard something behind him. Xiang Shaolong immediately lied low on the horse's back and 3 arrows flew past his back.

He laughed and with a tight grip around the horse's belly, is already far away

from them. After toppling another 10 odd lanterns, he realized that the soldiers are not coming towards him. Without hesitation, he hurried the horse to run faster towards his own camp.

By now the soldiers who were attacking the camp came running back in a frenzy, thinking that a large group of enemies have attacked them in their panic.

These thieves, besides Hui Hu, Wolfman and another 4 leaders, the rest were all foot soldiers so by the time they retreated, Hui Hu and those on horses were already way ahead.

Xiang Shaolong was brilliant and bold. He kept his Flying Rainbow and pulled out 2 flying needles instead and hid it in his hands.

In the darkness, Hui Hu could only rely on the far away fire and could not see clearly so he thought that the person coming towards them is his own man here to give a report so he shouted from afar, "What happened?"

Xiang Shaolong shouted back, "It's Prince Xinling's men!"

The rest of the bandit leaders were shocked and hastened over.

Hui Hu and Wolfman were a little further behind and Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented that it's a pity. He raised his hands and the flying needles shot out.

The strength of his wrist was formidable and the impact of the long and thin needles astonishing, going past the armor and the 2 bandit leaders right at

the front were struck immediately.

Before the 2 thieves fell, Xiang Shaolong had pulled out another 2 needles and threw them at another 2 people behind them.

Hui Hu and Wolfman both realized that something was not right and as they cried out, they pulled their long swords and came towards him from 2 sides.

By now the 2 men in the front row had already fell with a groan from the side of their horses.

Xiang Shaolong had no intention of retrieving the flying needles and with one hand controlling the horse and the other hand pulling out Flying Rainbow, he faced Wolfman who was coming from his left side.

Wolfman roared and borrowing the force from the running horse, aimed his sword towards his face.

Xiang Shaolong cried out and raised his sword to block and at the same time leaned to a side and raised his leg and kicked Wolfman in his waist.

This kick is modified from Thai kickboxing and extremely powerful. Wolfman screamed and fell off his horse.

By now the 2 men at the back row who were struck by the flying needles dropped to the ground with a dull thud.

The warhorses, having lost their riders, were stamping and jumping in shock.

When the hoof of one of the horses stamped down, it happened to land right on the chest of Wolfman who had fallen to the ground. Sounds of bones cracking could be heard immediately and this ferocious man died immediately.

Xiang Shaolong turned a circle around the 2 horses and took the opportunity to take out another flying needle and rushed towards Hui Hu's back.

Hui Hu saw that the situation was not right and turned his horse around, running swiftly towards the rapidly burning camp.

Xiang Shaolong removed his armor to lighten his body weight and gave chase.

His horse is carrying a much lighter load compared to Hui Hu's horse, and it's also especially strong so it was only about 7 or 8 horse lengths behind Hui Hu in the blink of an eye.

Without a word, Xiang Shaolong threw his flying needle.

Who would have expected that Hui Hu saw that there's no way he can run away so he might as well turned his horse around and coincidentally managed to avoid the flying needle.

That place happens to be right between the camp and the retreating soldiers so there was no one around for the moment, and it became a one to one situation.

Hui Hu raised his sword and came rushing back, shouting, “Who is that?”

Xiang Shaolong laughed loudly, “It’s your old friend Xiang Shaolong.”

Amidst the sound of metal clanking, the 2 of them went past each other on horseback and exchanged 3 sword strokes but no one gained the upperhand.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect him to have such excellent arm strength and swordsmanship. When he turned his horse around, he used his thighs to control the horse while his right hand held Flying Rainbow and his left hand drew out a flying needle.

He has been spending most of his time on horseback recently and this made his horsemanship improve greatly so he’s no longer the greenhorn he used to be.

Hui Hu took the opportunity to draw his bow and arrow and cocked the arrow with lightning fast speed. With a ‘clang’ he released a strong arrow, his long sword held across by his teeth.

Xiang Shaolong’s training has always been avoiding bullets so he’s not afraid of his arrow at all. He leaned to the side and avoided the arrow and his thigh tightened against the horse’s belly and it surged forward.

Hui Hu did not expect him to avoid this fatal strike and in shock he threw the bow at him while taking his long sword, which was clasped in his mouth.

Xiang Shaolong raised his feet and kicked the flying bow away. Flying

Rainbow swept past, towards Hui Hu's chest.

There was a loud 'clang'.

Although Hui Hu managed to narrowly block the sword, but his defense was raised chaotically while his opponent's attack is planned. On top of that, he used the momentum from the running horse to increase the power of the strike so Hui Hu collapsed onto his horse's back.

Xiang Shaolong roared and with a backhand let loose the flying needle.

There was a 'clink', and although the flying needle struck Hui Hu, it landed on his hard helmet and ricocheted off.

Xiang Shaolong knows that the situation is dire, if he allows the two horses to run in the wrong direction like this, there'll be no way he can catch up with this fiend within the short distance to the camp so he dismounted his horse with a back flip, turned a somersault in the air and Flying Rainbow flew out of his hand.

By now Hui Hu had just managed to seat himself upright, his thighs clasp his horse's belly when Xiang Shaolong's extremely sharp Flying Rainbow, which was made by the finest craftsman in the State of Yue, pierced him in his back and he died on the spot.

The horse ran wildly and after a distance away, Hui Hu's body fell from the horse.

Xiang Shaolong landed on the ground safely and ran up to retrieve his Flying Rainbow.

Thunderous war cries were heard from his side of the camp, apparently Cheng Xu and the rest saw how chaotic the thieves were and took the opportunity to kill their way out.

Xiang Shaolong felt his valor rising and he cut off Hui Hu's head, ignoring the flowing fresh blood and with the head held aloft, leapt up the horse towards the 2000 horse thieves who were retreating and shouted, "Hui Hu is dead! Hui Hu is dead! Run away quickly! Escape!"

Those thieves who were running back carrying torches were already in a panic because they were being pursued, and now on seeing this person in front of them carrying Hui Hu's head, thought that a strong army has come. No one dared to fight on and with a shout, all of them ran away in all directions.

The defeat of the thieves was like a domino effect, the thieves running at the back has no idea what has happened but the chain reaction made them run for their lives as well.

2000 odd men, defeated without even a fight.

In a short while, Xiang Shaolong met up with Cheng Xu and his troops who were pursuing the thieves and the whole army cheered and killed their way towards the blazing enemy camp.

The thieves have lost their leader, their camp is on fire, their rations and horses lost and none of them is in the mood for battle and were all running away. Xiang Shaolong led his men and killed until the day broke, coming out totally victorious.

They have killed more than a thousand enemies, but on Xiang Shaolong's side only 5 men perished and 150 odd men injured. Fighting against the enemy's 10,000 odd troops with less than a thousand men and yet they suffered so little losses, it's really an unbelievable miracle. This has also established Xiang Shaolong's position in the battlefield.

But it was really a close shave towards victory.

When the enemy's camp was on fire, Hui Hu's men has already cleared all the obstacles on the slope and filled the ditches and was about to launch an offensive when urgent matters cropped up on their side and they had to retreat.

Those wooden stakes became an obstacle to the thieves' retreat instead and they were killed by the rocks that were rolled down and the arrows shot. Blood flowed like rivers and the scene looked like hell on earth.

Hui Hu and Wolfman's head were soaked in herbs and alcohol and light cavalry were tasked to send these back to the King of Zhao through shortcuts so that he can show these off to their fellow countrymen.

This is a psychological attack against Zhao Mu on Xiang Shaolong's part, to make the King of Zhao feel how important he really is. If not for the fact that



there's now another twist in Zhao Qian's affair, there might have been a chance for him to retain his loyalty.

When Xiang Shaolong returned to camp, only Prince Shaoyuan whose hatred for him has now increased, refused to come out, using his illness as an excuse. Even Lady Pingyuan came out to welcome his heroic return, and of course Zhao Ya, Zhao Qian and the other ladies as well.

Ever since ancient times, beauties have always loved heroes and when all the ladies looked at him, their gaze was filled with intoxication, making him feel as if he's in heaven.

In the 21st century, such a situation is almost impossible because everything depends on teamwork and collaboration, and an individual is only a small fry in the whole organization.

But in this warring states period, it is filled with romanticized individualistic heroism, that's why there are people like Shang Yang who can change the whole situation, and a famous general like Lian Po who rules the battlefield.

Xiang Shaolong is a product that has crossed time, with the training and knowledge of modern military tactics, that's why he can emerge miraculously victorious so many times.

So how can the ladies not fall for him.

Even the evil hearted Lady Pingyuan is now looking at him differently, and is now thinking of other things. Such a talent, if sacrificed will be such a waste.

Xiang Shaolong was injured in a few places and Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian dragged him into the commander's tent to tend to his injuries.

Lady Ya saw that Zhao Qian was not at all concerned that Xiang Shaolong was only wearing his shorts and was feeling perplexed. She was afraid that if there's something going on between the two of them, then there might be big trouble.

Zhao Qian asked with concern, "Is it painful?"

With 2 pretty ladies putting their dainty hands on him, he was so comfortable he almost moaned. Xiang Shaolong replied with a smile and lied down and fell into a deep sleep with the fragrances of the 2 ladies.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Three states joined as one**

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After winning Hu Hui, Xiang Shaolong still remained there for the next 10 days.

During this time the injured were recovering very well and after a discussion, everyone agreed that they should no longer wait for the border guard reinforcements for fear that the Weis will have some tricks up their sleeves again. They will continue the journey on their own and hopefully be able to meet the reinforcements on the way.

With this decision made, Xiang Shaolong went to see Lady Pingyuan.

Her family warriors' attitude towards him has changed greatly, being extremely respectful as if he is a deity.

Xiang Shaolong had found out from Lady Ya long ago that ever since Prince Pingyuan passed away, the 3000 odd family warriors he left behind all did not think highly of Prince Shaoyuan so many of them left and now there's less than 500 of them left.

If not for their connection with Prince Xinling, the King of Zhao would not have tolerated Prince Shaoyuan and allowed him to become such a bully in Handan.

Most of these family warriors are from Zhao and has no feelings towards the State of Wei. Now that they are slowly realizing that after Lady Pingyuan goes to Wei, she may never return to Zhao again, they are beginning to have second thoughts. And Xiang Shaolong has become the most ideal person for them to throw their lot with, firstly because of his background as the grandson-in-law of the Wu family, and most importantly they saw how righteous he is and his astounding swordsmanship, bravery and tactics.

In this era, a powerful man will naturally have men willing to follow him. And Xiang Shaolong's potential to become powerful is like the rising sun.

Mercenaries and family warriors represent a person's ability.

In the past Prince Xinling was able to snatch Jin Bi's military token to deal with the Qins because he already has a few thousand family warriors under him.

So it's a most natural thing that those in the Pingyuan's family changed their attitude towards him totally.

Outside Lady Pingyuan's tent, he bumped into the almost recovered Prince Shaoyuan but the latter did not even bother to take a look at him and went in on his own.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly commenting to himself, 'what a lad, consider yourself lucky that I did not give you trouble, and yet you have the audacity to show me your unhappiness.'

Ever since he injured Prince Shaoyuan so seriously, his hatred towards him has lessened greatly but now on seeing his antagonistic attitude, the feeling of old hatred came back.

Inside the tent, Lady Pingyuan was leaning on her couch, her wrist resting on the soft cushion, looking especially alluring, which made Xiang Shaolong's heart beat faster.

When she gave birth to Prince Shaoyuan, Zhao De, she was not any older than 15, so although she now has a grown up son, she's only in her 30s. This is the time a woman is most feminine, sultry and in need of the opposite sex.

Having a relationship with such a mature lady is certainly only to pursue the gratification of the body, unlike the illusions surrounding young couples which are quickly broken by reality.

That's why when he saw how inviting Lady Pingyuan look, thoughts of copulation immediately entered his head.

But instead he behaved properly and sat down at the side of her feet.

Lady Pingyuan asked nonchalantly, "Xiang Shaolong, you're not going to wait for reinforcements and planning to set off immediately?"

Xiang Shaolong was surprised, "You guessed!"

Lady Pingyuan rolled her eyes at him coquettishly and said, "Not a guess, but a deduction based on your character. Because you're not the kind who will

let others have the chance to move first.”

Xiang Shaolong was a little thrown off guard and said with a bitter smile, “It seems that Lady has changed your attitude towards me, not only are you not on your guard against me, but you seem to be luring me!”

Lady Pingyuan guffawed and rolled her eyes at him again, “It’s your thinking! But I am not going to lure you, instead I wish to have an honest talk with you, that’s why the change in attitude is a very natural thing.”

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be surprised, “That means that Lady has not been totally honest with me all this time.”

Lady Pingyuan replied frankly, “You can say that, because at that time I could not see through you. It was only until you defeated Hui Hu’s enormous army that I realized that you are not one who is will willingly let others control you, and you have the intelligence and ability to achieve this.”

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly, “You’re confusing me, how can I know when you’re telling me the truth and when you’re lying? Or maybe you only changed your tactic of dealing with me?”

Lady Pingyuan did not reply him but instead asked suddenly, “Do you know why An Li wants to destroy this wedding agreement between Zhao and Wei?”

Xiang Shaolong shook his head.

Lady Pingyuan's eyes were filled with sadness as she slowly explained, "The story will have to start from 20 years ago, which was 3 years before the battle of Chang Ping started. Zhao Qian was only 3 years old then."

By now Xiang Shaolong is quite familiar with the history of that time and asked, "Is Lady referring to the time the King of Qin sent the 'king of killing' Bai Qi to attack the state of Han?"

Lady Pingyuan chuckled, "King of killing? Humph! This nickname is indeed very suitable for that fiend whose hands are stained with blood."

She sighed and continued, "If the Qins were to invade east, those who will take the brunt first will be our 3 states, Wei, Zhao and Han. Facing the same calamity, feelings run especially strongly so the 3 most powerful officials in the 3 states secretly came to a deal, which is to let the 3 separated states join together and become a strong country while they are still living, which is akin to the Large State in the past. Only this way can they defeat the Qins and become the rulers of the world."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "So they actually had this thought."

Lady Pingyuan changed the topic, "Do you know why I wanted to marry Prince Pingyuan?"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that of course it's because she thought that Prince Pingyuan could take over the leadership position! However, he said instead, "Is that another political agreement?"

Lady Pingyuan said, “I guess you can put it that way! It is indeed part of an agreement, which is to make use of the marriages between royalty to strengthen the relations between the various Kings.” She continued with a smile, “But the most important reason, is because Wuji and me were very interested in the state of Zhao. Before the battle of Changping, the Zhaos had the world’s best generals and fighters and were unrivalled. The state of Zhao was the first to abandon fighting battles with carriages and instead changed to using cavalry as their main force.”

Wuji is Prince Xinling’s name.

During the Spring-Autumn period, carriages were the main forces used in battles. The war carriage represents a person’s status and ability. Changing the carriages to horses is in fact a revolution of that time, which also changed how battles were fought.

Because the State of Zhao had been in constant battles with the ferocious Xiong Nu\* and with their experienced gain from such battles, the Zhaos learnt that these nomadic army who fight mainly on horseback with archery is a lot more nimble and swift in their attacks. Therefore they abandoned fighting with carriages, a way of battle which looks majestic but is in fact useless.

Lady Pingyuan said sadly, “But after Chang Ping, our dreams were rudely shattered, but it also made us believe even more strongly that the only way to survive is to reunite the 3 states. This is the only way to avoid fighting and wars amongst ourselves.”



Xiang Shaolong said, “Those three important officials, naturally it’s Prince Xinling from Wei, Prince Pingyuan from Zhao, but who is the official in Han?”

Lady Pingyuan replied, “I have no wish to say it. In any way they used their influence and decided on a string of marriage agreements between the 3 states. The Empress of Zhao is a Han, and Prince Xinling married a Zhao lady. The marriage of Zhao Qian to the Crown Prince of Wei is the most important one in the agreements.”

Xiang Shaolong finally understood and he slapped his thigh as he said, “It must be that King An Li heard about this and was afraid the unification of the 3 states will make him lose his throne, that’s why he’s going all out to destroy this marriage agreement. But he is the King of Wei, if he wants to go back on the marriage agreement, he only has to say so, why waste so much effort?” He looked at her coldly and asked, “Why does Lady want to destroy Zhao Qian’s virginity?”

Lady Pingyuan’s pretty face blushed slightly and she asked, “Can you not try to settle old scores with me!”

She continued with a sad sigh, “But the situation changed, the early death of Prince Pingyuan has caused the shift of power in Zhao into that fiend Zhao Mu’s hands. That’s why Prince Xinling was forced to return to Wei and start a new round of fight with that useless King An Li, and Zhao Qian’s marriage agreement has lost its initial meaning.”

She was deep in thought for a moment, her eyes fixed on Xiang Shaolong before she continued, “In actual fact no one is trustworthy nowadays, but on

the surface everyone pretends to be honest in the ways they deal with the world. That useless King An Li has gone back on his words on many occasions, both to people in his own state and outside of it, so how can he go back on his word with the Zhaos. Besides he's very wary of Wuji, so he will not dare to oppose the agreement so publicly." She paused and said quietly, "Dealing with Zhao Qian is only a secondary matter, the real person he wants to get rid of is me. Because he knows that when Wuji and I join forces, we'll be a huge threat towards him, because I have what Wuji lacks, which is viciousness."

No one understands more than Xiang Shaolong what her last sentence means. Looking at her bright and lengthy eyes, he said quietly, "Why is it that Lady is suddenly being so honest with me, telling me such a great secret?"

Lady Pingyuan's smooth thighs moved slightly, touching the side of Xiang Shaolong's buttocks, her pretty face blushing and she said gently, "Because I saw a new ray of hope in you. Unless you do not step foot into Zhao forever, or else you will certainly have to engage in a life and death duel with Zhao Mu. If you can eliminate Zhao Mu, or take over his position, then it will again be possible for the 3 states to unite." She lowered her voice and added, "But this is not the most important reason, do you want to go on listening?"

Xiang Shaolong felt a headache coming on, he does not know if this is another of her ploy to deal with him. Because after eavesdropping on her conversation with her son the other night, her venomous nature has carved a very deep impression on him. Besides, she dotes on her son so much, so how can she really fall for her son's enemy and tell him what's really on her mind?

He thought to himself that if she wants to play games with him, he'll play along with her. He extended his hand and put it on her thigh, gently caressing her sensitive inner thigh, looked in her eyes and explained, "Of course I want to listen!"

Lady Pingyuan's eyes revealed an alluring gaze as she lowered her head to look at his invasive hand, saying gently, "Because I want to surrender to you, and beg for your love and pity."

Xiang Shaolong shifted forward and sealed her fragrant lips, his hands attacking her at the same time. Lady Pingyuan's body was shaking violently, her tongue cold as ice due to her passion and nervousness. Such unhidden natural reaction served to fuel Xiang Shaolong's lust.

A cold snort was heard from outside the tent.

The 2 of them were so shocked they separated and looked towards the entrance of the tent.

Prince Shaoyuan lifted the flap and entered, a flash of hatred and anger went across his eyes.

They both guessed that Prince Shaoyuan had actually entered earlier and saw them in their heated embrace but he stepped out again and snorted to surprise them before pretending that nothing has happened and stepped into the tent again.

Joy at having taken revenge surged in Xiang Shaolong's heart and without

waiting for Prince Shaoyuan to speak, he rose and said, “We’ll be traveling in the night tonight, so will Lady please make preparations.”

Without even looking at Prince Shaoyuan, he left.

Xiang Shaolong finally understood some things that seemed so foggy long ago, for example the reason Tian Dan sent Xiao Weimou to destroy the wedding agreement between Zhao and Wei is because he does not want the 3 states to unite. Not only will that be disadvantageous for Qin, it will also become a threat to the state of Qi and the other states.

Although the 3 states all had different family names, but they had once served the same master so naturally they are a lot closer to one another compared to other states.

In the past Prince Xinling risked himself to steal the military token and wrestle over the military power because he wants to preserve the state of Zhao, with the hope that one day the 3 states can unite into one and become the strongest state.

But Tao Fang once said that the Weis are most untrustworthy. Lady Pingyuan may have some true feelings for him, but for Prince Xinling, he’s just a useful pawn.

And the thing that influenced his decision the most, is that he knows that the 3 states will never unify. This has already been written in history books.

Can he change history?

“Commander!”

Xiang Shaolong turned towards the direction of the voice, it turns out to be one of two Zhao Qian’s personal maid, Cui Tong.

These 2 maids were extremely pretty and outstanding, about one or two years older than Zhao Qian, which makes them about 17 or 18 years old.

Cui Tong stopped him and with a lowered head, said “Third Princess would like to request the audience of Sir.”

Xiang Shaolong’s lust which was stirred up by Lady Pingyuan was not appeased, and on seeing how alluring and shy she looked, he felt a strong desire. But he thought that if he allow himself to do that, it will only serve to make Zhao Qian look down on him so he suppressed his urge and followed her to Zhao Qian’s tent.

Cui Tong dared not walk alongside him, and walked half a step behind him instead.

Xiang Shaolong turned his head around and threw a glance at her. When he saw her blushing, he asked quizzically, “Why is Sister Xiaotong so shy?”

Cui Tong was showered and kept her head so low that her forehead was almost touching her chest and dared not look at him.

By now the two of them have passed the guards and entered the compound and there’s no one else around the ladies camps. Xiang Shaolong is after all a

flirt and he grabbed her hand and asked gently, “Is there anyone in your tent?”

Cui Tong’s petite body trembled as she exclaimed in a mixture of shock and joy, “Commander! Please, others will find out.”

The flap of the tent where Xiao Zhao and the rest stayed in flipped open, startling Xiang Shaolong and he hurriedly released his hold on Cui Tong’s hand and hurriedly walked into Zhao Qian’s tent.

For the past 10 days, Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian has been behaving intimately. Other than the last hurdle, they have tried every other physical things possible and also suffering from trying to hold themselves back. That’s why for these 2 days, they are restricting themselves instead and dare not overstep the border, afraid that they will do something that they might regret and let others catch him deflowering the beautiful Third Princess.

Zhao Qian saw him arriving and happily gave him a long pouch which she sewed personally and said, “I made this especially for your wooden sword. Qian’er has never liked swords or weapons, but Xiang Lang’s wooden sword is an exception.” And she stared with irritation at Flying Rainbow, which was hung at his waist.

Xiang Shaolong like to carry Flying Rainbow with him because it’s light and swift and on seeing the beauty’s gift, he hugged her slender waist and kissed her tender cheeks before saying with a laugh, “You don’t even like the famous sword from Yue?”

Zhao Qian glared at him and said, “The Yue sword is well made and pretty, but it’s still a gift from Zhao Mu, and seeing it reminds me of him. Therefore I have no wish to see it.”

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, “So you don’t like Zhao Mu.”

Zhao Qian’s eyes reddened as she replied, “Not only do I hate him, but I hate Imperial Father even more.”

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and moved to a side and sat down with her. Lying on the soft cushion, his hands roaming about her bosom, he asked, “Did Zhao Mu try to do anything overboard with you?”

Zhao Qian was weak from his fondles and burrowed herself into his chest, saying sadly, “I have a marriage agreement with the Weis, so he dare not be so bold. However Qian’er’s mother died because of him.”

Xiang Shaolong was so shocked that he stopped his hand activity and asked hoarsely, “What?”

Hot tears rushed out as Zhao Qian hugged Xiang Shaolong tightly, “Xiang Lang must decide for Qian’er, and kill that fiend for me.”

Xiang Shaolong wiped away her tears and asked gently, “Tell me first how he caused your mother’s death.”

He has never asked Zhao Qian about matters involving the imperial court, and thought that the Zhao empress now is her birth mother.

Zhao Qian related sadly with tears in her eyes, “At that time Qian’er’s mother was still Imperial Father’s most beloved concubine. One night Zhao Mu and Imperial Father summoned Mother into the bedroom and the next day Mother hanged herself. Qian’er was only 10 years old, but I will never forget that scene. Mother died horribly!” And she cried bitterly again.

Xiang Shaolong did not imagine that such a flawless and pretty princess would have such a horrible childhood and allowed her to cry and vent her anger. Caressing her back, he felt a wave of inextinguishable anger welling up.

Zhao Mu and King Xiao Cheng are really worst than beasts, to actually engage in such sadistic sexual play in the palace. From this he can deduce that there are many more victims in the palace.”

The imperial palace is a place filled with the filthiest and unreasonable people.

The only way to change such immoralities is for himself to unite the world and install new values.

He remembered the words of Yuan Zong, the last great man of Mohism.

When he was discussing the philosophy of this era with Yuan Zong, Xiang Shaolong mentioned Confucius and Yuan Zong said dismissively, “He just refused to face reality, thinking of the past and present all the time and only knows how to protect tradition. He’s is not worthy to have such a high and respected position. He advocates so-called rituals, which only serves to make



the various heads of states spends even more excessively and the country's wealth will be in the selfish hands of a small group. He only theorizes but is not aware of the actual situations, and totally ignorant about hardship of wars. The most irritating thing is that he belittles those who works with their hands, and makes fun of his disciple Fan Chi who is a farmer as 'a small man'."

Naturally Xiang Shaolong is not intellectual enough to have a debate with him, but he does know that the 2 schools of thought, Mohism and Confucianism, are like the north and south poles, both opposite extremes.

Not only is Mozi a famed warrior, he's also a craftsman, something that Confucius look down on. He worked with his hands and feet and regard rituals as a false pretense and a waste of resources. The biggest difference is, the teachings of Confucius is to the benefit of the traditional monarch while Mozi goes after a new outlook in society.

No monarch will like Mozi's ideals.

This is also the main reason why Confucius was almost regarded as a deity later.

It was also from Yuan Zong that Xiang Shaolong realized that the term 'ru'\* is not a term used only by the disciples of Confucius during that era.

A 'ru' was initially the scholar who maintains the clan's parents, ancestors, family history etc but after the family clan fell into hard times, they stayed around the commoners and using their knowledge of poetry, books, rituals,

helped others with the rites for funerals etc, or teach others what they learnt in order to earn some money for living expenses.

It's only when Confucius expounded on the philosophy of 'Education of a Scholar' (Jun Zi Ru), did the term 'ru' became a term specifically used for Confucianism.

Each school of thought represents their ideals towards governance.

To Xiang Shaolong, Mozi's teachings are more suited to his taste. But of course he won't just accept everything in the teachings.

Zhao Qian's sobbing stopped and on seeing him so quiet, she can't help but call out, "Xiang Lang!"

Xiang Shaolong lifted her face up and kissed her a few times before saying. "Don't be afraid! I'll be there to protect you in future."

Zhao Qian said sadly, "I don't wish to return to Zhao."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and asked, "You want to stay in Wei?"

Zhao Qian exclaimed, "Of course not, but as long as I can stay by your side, I am not afraid of any hardship." She continued with a cry, "If I return to the Zhao palace, and there's no marriage agreement, Zhao Mu will certainly not let me off. Then death will be the only way for Qian'er to repay Xiang Lang."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows and asked, "Can he really be so lawless?"

Isn't Lady Ni able to escape from his evil clutches and remain unscathed?"

Zhao Qian exclaimed. "Lady Ni is different! Her father-in-law is the famous Zhao general Zhao She and most of the leaders and generals in the army were taught by him. Therefore no matter how much Zhao Mu covets her, he dare not force himself on her. But my status is entirely dependant on my Imperial Father, if he doesn't protect me, there's no one who can save me."

Xiang Shaolong consoled her, "There's me!" Only now did he realize that Zhao Ni had married Zhao Gua's brother, no wonder Zhao Ni and Lady Ya are so close to each other.

Zhao Qian sighed, "Zhao Mu knows how to use drugs very well, if he's really intent on having me, there's no way Qian'er will be able to stop him. I can only copy my Mother!" She felt a deep sorrow and started crying again.

A fire of hatred burned in Xiang Shaolong's heart.

For Zhao Qian, for Shu'er's revenge, when he returns to Zhao, that will be the time he'll have a life and death duel with Zhao Mu! He will use all methods to attack this fiend, it doesn't matter even if he has to use the help of Prince Xinling and Lady Pingyuan.

After he left Zhao Qian, he returned to his commander's tent.

Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo were waiting for him to discuss the route to take to Fengqiu.

After his conversation with Lady Pingyuan, he was suddenly enlightened and understood what used to baffle him.

If he can return to the 21st century, he'll certainly become the leading expert in the history of the warring states period.

The 3 states disintegrated and became Han, Zhao and Wei, but the most ironic part is that these 3 states have been constantly hoping to reunited again. The only problem is who will become the king!

The most direct way is to attack and conquer.

The first to start was the very magnificent Wei who even managed to invade Handan and stayed there for 2 years until they were forced to retreat by the state of Qi.

Naturally the state of Qi did not come to the Zhaos rescue because they felt a special liking for them, but because what Qi fears most is the unification of the 3 states. Because under that situation, the first to be in trouble will be the state of Qi due to its close proximity to the 3 states.

Later the Weis suffered heavy losses at the battle of Maling and 100,000 brave troops were eliminated in one day. Even the Chief Commander Prince Shen and the great general Pang Juan lost their lives and they never managed to pick themselves up after that fall.

For the Weis, the battle of Maling is akin to the battle of Chang Ping to the Zhaos, with deep reaching influence.

Because the other states were afraid of the unification of the 3 states, they took the opportunity to keep invading Wei. The continuous attacks by Qi, Qin and Chu made Wei unable to use their military power to unify the 3 states.

But the threat by the Qins are growing bigger day by day.

Therefore the most influential senior officials in the 3 states secretly arranged marriage agreements and such, hoping to unify the 3 states in a more peaceful way. Naturally they are the only ones who know the details.

But the State of Qi has been keeping their eye on them all the time, that's why Tian Dan sent Xiao Weimou this time to destroy this marriage agreement.

Now Xiang Shaolong is very certain that Xiao Weimou will not let them off.

Xiao Weimou is not like Hui Hu, who was a mix of soldier and thief. He is a professional killer, a little like the special task force he used to be in, specializing in infiltrating enemy camps to investigate, search, destroy or assassinate, and will be a difficult person to deal with.

Therefore they have to meet up with their reinforcements earlier, only then will they be really safe.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Defending against the enemy with fire**

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The snow this year came especially late, the grass is still green on the plains and the lakes still sparkling.

This place lies between the main Yellow River and it's tributaries and the 2 main river splits into hundreds of smaller rivers. The rivers weaved across each other like silver threads, the grass was lush, thick and fragrant and it was a meeting place between the forest grass and dried grass of the plains.

The entourage traveled slowly through this large piece of flat carpet-like grassland.

This is still a place which has not been developed, and only a handful of nomads stayed there. They each have their own lifestyle, like the pretty Baiyi tribe in Zhao, and goes about their own business, not accepting the control of the government.

This place has lots of cows, horses and deer. Traveling past this area, they will see them galloping in the distance or lazily grazing.

But this prehistoric place is also a place where fierce beasts roam.

The more frightening are the wild wolves pack, who kept following in front of behind the troops, not afraid of humans at all.

Xiang Shaolong sent out 10 teams comprising of 5 men each to scout around the area to avoid being ambushed by enemies who might be hiding in the tall grass or the woods.

3 days later, the terrain started to change, with rising and falling hills and wild grass everywhere, greatly slowing their progress.

Xiang Shaolong felt extremely uneasy.

With Xiao Weimou's evil reputation, if his men are all really good as rumored, he will certainly know that they have battled Hui Hu. At the very least he would have captured some 'escaped thieves' and grilled them to find out their whereabouts.

If his deduction is correct, then Xiao Weimou must be following them and waiting for the best time to strike.

But where will they strike?

By noon, the answer appeared finally. It's a huge mountain diagonally in front of them, and the only way past it is a narrow passage about 3li long.

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows deeply on seeing it and was silent for a moment before summoning Cheng Xu, Wu Zhuo and Zha Yuanyu over and said, "If my guess is correct, Xiao Weimou and his men must be waiting for us at that narrow valley."

Cheng Xu nodded his head, "According to our scout's report, if there are

people lying in ambush on the top of both side of the cliffs, just throwing rocks at us will be enough for all of us to perish.”

Zha Yuanyu said with a miserable look, “This place is dense with grass and trees, if the enemy were to set up a fire upwind, the thick smoke will be enough to suffocate us to death.”

Xiang Shaolong laughed, “Thick smoke can only be used to deal with those who are unprepared. Yuanyu, you will immediately organize all the men to remove all the grass and trees on this side of the mountain and slopes and dig a deep ditch at the bottom of the valley to lure the nearby streams into the ditch to surround the camp. We will join the carriages to face the mountain to protect the camp. At the same time prepare a large amount of clear water in the camp, each camp is to have at least 2 barrels and everyone is to carry with them cloths or handkerchiefs. When there’s thick smoke, soak it in the water and cover the face with it, then they need not fear the choking smoke.”

Zha Yuanyu was about to get to work when Xiang Shaolong called him back again and said, “Tell everyone to remove their armors or it might affect the tasks!”

Zha Yuanyu left with that order.

After Xiang Shaolong discussed a little further with Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo, he was about to look for Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian when Prince Shaoyuan appeared hurriedly towards him with a few family warriors and demanded, “Xiang Shaolong! Why are we stopping at such a dangerous place? How are



we going to fend against the enemy if they use fire to attack us?"

Xiang Shaolong replied coldly, "You can cross the narrow valley alone if you like! But I won't be accompanying."

Prince Shaoyuan's eyes were burning and after staying silent for a moment, naturally he dared not take the risk so he changed his tune, "Since we can't enter, then we should retreat to a safer place."

Wu Zhuo can't help but interrupt, "The sun will set in 6 hours, and the mountain terrain is difficult to maneuver, if we retreat to a place where we get stuck, we might as well..."

Prince Shaoyuan shouted angrily, "Shut up! A servant like you has no right to interrupt."

Wu Zhuo's expression changed and his hand moved to his sword.

Xiang Shaolong put his hand around Wu Zhuo's shoulder and said with a smile, "Young Master is mistaken, Wu Zhuo is my battle mate, his words are my words."

Cheng Xu said with a cold smile, "Whoever sounds more reasonable, we will obey that person."

Prince Shaoyuan was so furious that the color on his face alternated between pale and red, and he left in a huff.

Wu Zhuo said gratefully, "To be able to fight side by side with Young Grand Master-in-law, is the happiest thing in my life."

Xiang Shaolong patted him warmly before letting go of his hold on his shoulder and looking at the narrow valley, said, "If we can survive tonight, I'm confident that I can deal with Xiao Weimou's soldiers hiding in ambush above the narrow valley."

Chang Xu replied, "According to my calculation, Xiao Weimou's men are certainly not as many as ours, or else they would have attacked us head on long ago when we were traveling."

They talked a little further before Xiang Shaolong went to see Lady Ya.

Xiao Zhao and the rest had just set up camp and on seeing his arrival, hurriedly paid their respects.

Looking at these pretty young girls, Xiang Shaolong's spirits lifted and after flirting with them for a moment, he went in to see Lady Ya.

Lady Ya received him warmly and after letting him have his way with her for a while, they sat on the rug and she said, "Shaolong! There are some words that Ya'er must say, please don't be offended!"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "You must be wanting to ask me about my relationship with Zhao Qian. Don't worry! She's still a virgin."

Lady Ya replied, "But you have aroused her desires, how can she be willing to

marry to Wei, and if so why do we still need to go to Daliang?"

Xiang Shaolong replied nonchalantly, "Naturally it's to steal 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'!"

Lady Ya exclaimed seriously, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong stopped smiling and said, "I know you want to say, 'if Prince Xinling knows that we are going there to steal the manual, he definitely won't allow us to succeed', right?"

Lady Ya bit his shoulder in anger, so upset that she could not say a word.

Xiang Shaolong caressed her shoulder and consoled her, "Trust your husband! In this era where everyone is trying to trick everyone else, we can only act according to circumstances. For all you know we can have our cake and eat it too. Hei! It seems like a long time since I was intimate (xin fang = doing intimate things in a room) with you."

Lady Ya replied coquettishly, "It's 'not been intimate in camp', we don't have a 'room' here."

Before Xiang Shaolong has a chance to reply, Xiaozhi's voice was heard calling from the outside, "Vice-Commander Cheng invites Master Xiang to come out immediately!"

Xiang Shaolong sighed and told Lady Ya, "It must be that fellow Prince Shaoyuan who has gotten into trouble again."

As expected, Prince Shaoyuan has summoned his family warriors and was determined to have his own way and retreat from this mountain on his own.

By the time Xiang Shaolong arrived, Lady Pingyuan was trying to persuade her beloved son to abolish the idea.

When Prince Shaoyuan saw Xiang Shaolong, he got even more furious and exclaimed irritably, "I am not going to sit and die with others. There are forests all around this place, we're in the open while the enemy is in hiding, how long can we defend ourselves? Only a fool who knows nothing about military matters will do such a stupid thing which is akin to committing suicide."

Lady Pingyuan replied angrily, "What right do you have to criticize others? Can you defeat Hui Hu's huge army? That day when Hui Hu was attacking, besides hiding in your tent, what outstanding things have you done."

Prince Shaoyuan did not expect his mother to embarrass him in public and he nodded his head and said, "Fine! Now you're totally siding with an outsider, and turned around to deal with your own son. From today onwards, I don't have a mother like you."

"Pak!"

Lady Pingyuan gave him an angry slap and with her body shaking, exclaimed, "Say that again one more time!"

Prince Shaoyuan cupped the side of his cheek that was slapped, his eyes filled

with viciousness and alternated between looking at her and Xiang Shaolong before saying frostily, "Now that you have a lover, why do you still need a son like me!" He raised his voice and cried out, "Children! Those who still want to stay alive, come with me."

Lady Pingyuan was so furious her face paled and she cried out, "No one is allowed to follow him. I am still in charge of this family, since when is it his turn to talk."

The family warriors all kept quiet, but everyone knows that no one will take the risk with Prince Shaoyuan.

Lady Pingyuan looked at Prince Shaoyuan coldly and said, "If you do not come and kowtow to me and admit your mistake, you can forget about expecting my forgiveness." She humphed and returned to her camp.

Xiang Shaolong did not even bother to take a look at the stoned Prince Shaoyuan, but just gave the orders, "Those who really want to live, get to work immediately."

All the family warriors uttered their reply and ignoring Prince Shaoyuan, went about chopping trees and cutting grass.

The others all dispersed, leaving only Prince Shaoyuan standing all alone there, helpless.

The sun was setting, the earth getting dark, the freezing wind blowing from the northwestern direction.

Xiang Shaolong's army was all on the alert, waiting with their weapons. Only a few lamps were lighted in the camp and the scene was miserable and cold.

Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo were sitting on a carriage, which surrounded the camp, looking at the movements around them.

The sound of something hard dropping was heard from the other side of the mountain.

The three of them immediately perked up.

They've finally confirmed the presence of the enemy, confirmed Xiang Shaolong's analysis.

The sound of something falling came because the enemy ran into the horse-tripping ropes they put up.

It must be known that before this moment, whether there really is an enemy out there is still an unknown, with no facts to support that point. They only deduced that if there is an enemy out there, then they must be hiding in the narrow valley. This place still belongs to the Weis after all, so Xiao Weimou will have to work speedily and attack the camp in the cover of the night.

If they have to attack at night, this kind of place is most advantageous to attack with fire, and to attack with fire they must first position themselves upwind. Therefore their enemy will certainly have to leave the narrow valley and go to another mountain, which faces them at the other side of the camp.

So based on this point, they laid down horse tripping ropes in the wilderness on both sides of the camp. If the enemy were to trip and fall and make some noise, they would be able to know the position of the enemy even in the darkness.

Sounds of things dropping and quiet groans were heard.

Xiang Shaolong laughed loudly and shouted, "Xiao Weimou, you've been tricked! Release the arrows!"

Lamps were lighted in the camp, hundreds of fire arrows were shot high into the air, aiming towards the side and the entrance of the narrow valley, leaving only a clear spot upwind.

The flames burned all around as the dry woods caught fire rapidly, and the wind blew the flames and smoke towards the narrow valley, surrounding the enemies who came under the cover of the night with flames. It turns out that Xiang Shaolong has already ordered his men to splash oil on the woods so that it will burn once it catches fire.

Thick smoke rose up, most of them blown towards the narrow valley, with only a little smoke floating towards their camp.

Everyone hurriedly dampened their cloths and covered their noses and mouths with it.

Screams and groans were heard, the enemy is helpless and did not expect Xiang Shaolong to strike first and use fire to attack them instead.

Shadows appeared.

The entrance to the valley has been blocked by the huge fire and the enemies who were in hiding around the camp has no choice but to take the risk and attack the camp.

The Zhao soldiers saw that their commander's eccentric plans have worked again and morale was greatly boosted. In unison, they all rushed over and started shooting arrows at the enemies who were making their way up the slope.

Without any cover for protection and hindered by the dark smoke, the enemies fell one by one and only 10 odd enemies managed to past the flooded ditch that surrounded the camp but all of them perished at the slope.

The outcome of the battle is certain.

Xiang Shaolong saw that even in such dire circumstances, their enemies were still fierce and swift and was secretly thanking his good luck. If it's a head on attack, he may be able to win but he will certainly suffer heavy losses on his side as well. The situation would not be so easy like now. Obviously intellect and bravery must work hand in hand, neither one can be missing.

By now the surrounding forests were all in flames and the fire burned high into the sky, ancient trees falling one by one, swallowed by the fire, increasing the magnificence of the scene.



Thick black smoke traveled into the narrow valley and the fire followed close behind.

The enemy was forced by the fire to launch an attack and some of them have already become inferno men even before then rush out, and they will die even without the arrows shooting them.

What was originally a picturesque wilderness has now become hell on earth.

Screams and cries kept coming out from the scene of the fire, the shouts shattering the sky.

Blood flowed like the river along the slope and ditch.

By dawn, the perimeter up to 10 li away all became charred soil, the fire was still burning far away but has weakened greatly by now.

Xiang Shaolong with his marvelous plan managed to take care of the enemy without losing a single man, and without even knowing what Xiao Weimou looks like. As the saying goes, ‘those who are adept in battles, will have outstanding outcomes.’

Corpses lined the area after the fire and according to their calculation, almost a thousand men were burned or shot.

It’s just that they do not know if Xiao Weimou is one of the dead.

Xiang Shaolong led a team personally to the narrow valley to make sure that

there's no enemy left before letting the others set off immediately, leaving this horrendous place which now looks like hell.

After passing the narrow valley and traveling northeast for about 4 hours, the group reached the western bank of Pushui.

This part of the river was filled with more rocks than mud, so the water was very clear.

After few li down north, a clear and sparkling huge lake appeared in front of them, with lush plants growing around it and huge eagles, wild ducks and kingfishers flying about. With the blue sky and white clouds as backdrop, it formed a very enchanting scene.

After working hard for one whole night, everyone was in high spirits on reaching this place and immediately set up camp next to the lake and started preparing dinner.

The soldiers were casting nets and catching fishes, and it feels as if they are on a holiday instead.

Lady Ya was suddenly in the mood and ordered someone to put up curtains at a corner of the lake and started bathing and playing in the clear water. In the end even Zhao Qian, Cui Tong and Cui Lü couldn't withstand the temptation and joined them, their eyes filled with endless joy and fun.

Xiang Shaolong sat lazily on a huge rock next to the lake, admiring the view of the lake and mountains, looking at the endless green grass, with the lake's

water clear and green with the reflection of the trees, feeling extremely intoxicated.

The soldiers were enjoying themselves too, stripping themselves naked and jumping into the lake and swimming languidly. After going through so much shocking events, no one can blame them for letting loose now.

As Xiang Shaolong was sharing their joy, Lady Pingyuan's voice rang out gently behind him, "Shaolong, why aren't you swimming as well?"

Xiang Shaolong turned his head around and smiled, "If Lady is willing to frolic with me in the water, your subordinate will gladly oblige."

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face blushed slightly and sat down next to him before sighing sadly, "My opinion of you is getting higher and higher. If you were in charge of the battle of Chang Ping, I can guarantee that the 400,000 who died would not be the Zhaos but the Qins, and the whole situation would have been different."

Xiang Shaolong leaned over, touching her shoulder, smelling her fragrance and said humbly, "Lady you flatter me, it's just a small victory, nothing to talk about." He paused and asked, "How is Prince Shaoyuan?"

Lady Pingyuan's face turned icy and she said through clenched teeth, "Don't talk about that useless beast." She sighed helplessly, and was silent.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, "Does he dare not to kowtow to you and apologize?"

Lady Pingyuan turned her head around and looked at him deeply and said, “What’s the use of kowtowing and apologizing? I’ve never been satisfied with my late husband, and now this beast is even worse than him.” She lowered her head and said with a blush, “Shaolong! Can you give me a child, as long as he is half like you, I’ll be very satisfied.”

Xiang Shaolong was initially startled, then he was ecstatic and said, “It’s only at this time that I really do not feel any enmity Lady has towards me.”

Lady Pingyuan’s pretty face blushed more crimson as she replied quietly, “You earned this with your capability. After seeing your almost divine tactics time and again, I no longer wish to be your enemy.”

Xiang Shaolong reached out and held her wrist, asking, “Do you want to become my woman?”

A look of helplessness came over Lady Pinyuan as she sighed quietly, “Now I no longer wish to hide anything from you. For my return to Wei this time, it’s been arranged that I’ll re-marry a general who has control of the military, this is a fact that cannot change. You... will you blame me?”

Xiang Shaolong was relieved instead. In reality he only has lust and not feelings for this woman, and only harbored the feeling of having fun with her. On one hand he will use this to take revenge against Prince Shaoyuan for causing the death of Su Nu, and it’s also a way to stay alive, so how can he blame her. Of course he had to pretend to be sad and extremely disappointed on the surface.

The alarm sound went off.

Xiang Shaolong looked over in shock, and saw on the flat lands in the distance, a troop of horses and men were running towards them.

Lady Pingyuan's hands gripped his tightly and said ecstatically, "The reinforcements from the pass are here."

## **Chapter 9**

### **In a dangerous position**

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The capital of Wei, Daliang, is situated on the southern bank of the Yellow River, where the big rivers like Luoshui, Suishui, Weishui, Danshui and Honggou etc converge. The Weis also dug up 2 man-made canals Dagou and Lianggou to surround and protect Daliang. It became a natural barrier, making this great city easy to defend but difficult to invade, giving them stability. The State of Wei was situated in the middle of the central plains then, with her north backing Zhao, west siding Qin, east siding Qi and south facing Chu. It's at the crossroad of the meeting place of the world. Daliang is situated right in the middle of the state of Wei and is an important city in any battle plans since it's right in the middle of important roads and waterways. If one wants to invade the other 5 sates, the task will be made very difficult if he does not defeat Wei first and in order to defeat Wei, Daliang is a place they must gain control of. Therefore one can see how important this capital of Wei is.

Xiang Shaolong and his party rested at Fengqiu for 3 days and under the protection of 2000 men from the Pass, crossed the Yellow River and after traveling for another 15 days, Daliang is just in the distance. Throughout the journey, Xiang Shaolong was relaxed, as if he has joined a tour group for ancient China and traveling through 'old places'. In his relaxed frame of mind, he imagined that on this huge and open land, there are countless cities scattered over it, each city with its strong and high city walls and the vast open land beyond the city walls. And each city is the center for battles and

for expansion of the military. Everything important that happened in this era, happened around places like these, spreading with the invasion and defense of cities as centers. Whether a city could be protected or taken, shows the fortune and success of a country. Such battles which centers on attacking cities is the simplest and most straightforward and if seen from another angle, it also has an indescribable captivation. To a ruler in the warring states period, it's like a game of chess. Once hooked and you're unable to pull yourself away and the only way is to have a battle of wits, to see who will become the ultimate survivor.

In these enclosed city walls, are military centers of different sizes, and are the most important military command center for the surround area and also the symbol of power. Defeating these cities will mean destroying the other party's governmental control. The troops from the Pass escorted them until they were about 10li north of Dagou before going back to Fengqiu, leaving the task of escorting them to the military situated at the outskirts of Daliang. By this time the welcoming party sent by Prince Xinling has arrived and escorted them through the hanging bridge past Dagou. And Prince Xinling, Wei Wuji, has already set up a formation on the other end, ready to receive this wedding entourage who has went through so much difficulties.

Wei Wuji, one of the 4 Princes of the warring states period, was dressed in casual wear, sitting astride a horse. He has a square face and big ears, tall and good-looking with a stern and respectable air about him. Although he was smiling warmly, his eyes were gleaming which gives one a sense of awe. He may be Lady Pingyuan's younger brother but he looks older than his sister, maybe because of long-term stress that aged him faster. After a round of small talk, all of them headed towards Daliang.

The city of Daliang was full of sights and sounds, the city streets wide and spacious forming an inconsistent rectangular shape, following the curves of the rivers with the southern gate as the main gate. All the city gates have a protruding watch tower which greatly improved the defenses. They have to travel another 5li north from the city gate, and the sand was blowing in front of them. All of them awaited for the King of Wei's orders and the edict states that besides Xiang Shaolong, Zhao Qian and the other ladies, the rest of the group have to set up camp outside the city. Naturally Lady Pingyuan, her son and their family warriors are not under such restrictions. Xiang Shaolong felt extremely surprised and indignant. And a look of unhappiness appeared on Prince Xinling's face but as it's an imperial order, and unless he has made up his mind to rebel immediately, he can only accept this humiliating arrangement. After Xiang Shaolong gave some instructions to Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo, he followed Prince Xinling into Daliang.

Compared to Handan, Daliang looks different. It did not have the ancient magnificence of Zhao, but has its own exquisite intricacies. It's decorations were more colorful. The streets in the city were split into 8 large streets from north to south and 4 main streets from east to west crisscrossing one another. These 12 large streets are wide enough to accommodate more than 10 horses moving side by side, so one can imagine how huge it is. With the imperial soldiers opening the path for them, the entourage passed by the decorated streets outside the palace, went around the high walls of the palace and came to a place at the northeastern corner where the nobility and senior officials reside.

Along the way the streets were full of activities and there were twice as many people on the streets as compared to Handan. When they saw Prince



Xinling's flag, they all looked respectful and some even knelt down to pay their respects, which goes to show how esteemed Prince Xinling is in the hearts of the Weis. Prince Xinling's residence, Wei'e Chu is situated right at the end of the street. Behind the high walls, tall trees reached into the sky, which showed off Prince Xinling's extraordinary status. Xiang Shaolong was separated from Zhao Qian and the rest and were assigned different courtyards to reside in. Prince Xinling was very warm in his welcome and sent 4 pretty maids to personally serve him. After cleaning up, he received Xiang Shaolong immediately in the study. After all the maids retreated, Prince Xinling warmly invited Xiang Shaolong to partake the meal and after offering him a toast, Prince Xinling said, "Shaolong you are indeed extraordinary, to be able to defeat more than 10,000 horse thieves with only 800 men. No wonder you can rise to fame so swiftly in Zhao." Xiang Shaolong knows that this is his opening speech, and hurriedly expressed his humble thanks.

Prince Xinling raised his wine cup and was silent for a moment before continuing with a slight smile, "Everyone saw that the battle of Chang Ping greatly weakened the state of Zhao from a strong state, but very few people saw that the Qins also suffered heavy losses in this battle. How else could I have defeated the Qins in Handan 6 years ago if not for that, and subsequent the combined forces of Yue Cheng and Qing He from your state, together with the states Han, Chu and Bi also greatly defeated the Qins." Xiang Shaolong has no idea why he would bring up this matter, so he just bulldozed his way through to try and flatter him, saying "It's all due to your intelligence and decisiveness that gave the Qins their most terrible defeat ever since Shang Yang changed the policies." Prince Xinling smiled proudly, "The King of Qin is narrow minded, he has such a good general in Bai Qi but because of a fit of anger, forced him to his death. Fan Sui also gave up his premier post 4

years ago which greatly weakened Qin further, which gave us the opportunity to conquer Taojun. If my estimation is correct, the Qins can forget about regaining their strength within the next 20 years.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly impressed and thought to himself that this Prince Xinling is indeed a talent of his times. Because from what he knows from the history books, it is indeed 20 odd years later that Qin manage to destroy the other 6 states. Prince Xinling personally poured the wine and after drinking a toast, said solemnly, “Now that Lu Buwei caused the death of King Xiaowen, and allowed Yiren to ascend the throne and the world was in fear because they know how formidable Lu Buwei is. But I see it from another point of view. With the Qins being so suspicious of any outsiders, how can they allow Lu Buwei to control the politics, therefore there must be internal strife which will again weaken their plans to invade east.” Xiang Shaolong complimented him sincerely, “No wonder you are so well respected by the people, you can really analyze and understand the situations well.” Of course he knew that in the end Emperor Qin exterminated Lu Buwei’s entire clan, that’s why he is especially amazed by Prince Xinling’s farsightedness. Among the 4 princes in the warring states period, he and Prince Mengchang emerged tops, and obviously he does live up to his name.

He thought of how frightened the Zhaos were once they heard that Lu Buwei is now in power and the contrast against Prince Xinling shows how bold and far-sighted he is. Prince Xinling’s eyes gleamed and he sighed meaningfully, “Shaolong! If the 3 states were to unify, now is the time.” In truth, Xiang Shaolong is very much interested in this idea because who can guarantee that history will not change. At least the Emperor of Qin now is a useless person, totally different from the smart and brave Emperor described in

history books. Since he wants to deal with Zhao Mu, naturally he will need the help of Prince Xinling and once he thought of this, his heart started pounding. Prince Xinling is indeed astute, just by studying his looks and behavior, he already knows what he is thinking and nodded his head with satisfaction, "My elder sister is indeed right about you, Shaolong is indeed a bold and intelligent man." He continued in a lowered voice, "Does Shaolong know that you are in a dangerous position where you will find it difficult to advance or retreat." Xiang Shaolong nodded his head to indicate his understanding.

However, Prince Xinling shook his head and smiled, "You don't really know yet. Tell me! Do you know Hui Hu is which person's trusted aide?" Xiang Shaolong was stunned and asked, "Doesn't Hui Hu take orders from your King?" Prince Xinling replied, "That coward would not dare to touch anything that might incite public fury. Anli's most beloved Lord Longyang\* handled all these secretive evil plans. According to secret reports, Lord Longyang hates you to the core, that's why he forced Anli to give the orders not to allow your men to enter the city so that you'll be alone and helpless. If not for my strong support of you, Shaolong would have perished long ago." Xiang Shaolong felt numb but also found the situation hilarious at the same time.

It was really unexpected that he would actually meet the famous Lord Long Yang, whose name has long become synonymous with gays. Without a question, An Li and Lord Long Yang's relationship is similar to King Xiaocheng's relationship with Zhao Mu. Apparently the royalty in this era, due to the 2 extremes in their lifestyle of extravagance and constant fear of losing their lives, have all turned a little abnormal. Prince Xinling said, "Lord Long Yang is one of the 3 most famous swordsmen in the state of Wei. He is

intelligent and cunning, and certainly not easy to deal with.” Xiang Shaolong sighed and said, “We can consider this to pose difficulty in me advancing, but why can’t I retreat then?” Prince Xinling stared at him for a moment before saying calmly, “Because if you return to Zhao, Zhao Mu will certainly try to take your life.”

Xiang Shaolong remembered that Lady Pingyuan once told him that the King of Zhao has taken a liking to him, and if that’s really the case, what Prince Xinling just told him is not just to scare him. He sighed and said, “To tell you the truth, I was ordered to come to Wei this time with another secret mission, which is to steal the ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual’.” He obviously knows that Prince Xinling is already aware of this, so he said it out first to gain his trust. As expected Prince Xinling chortled, reached out and patted his shoulder and exclaimed, “Great! It’s only now that I believe you really have the intention of allying yourself with us. If you can work for me well, I can guarantee you endless wealth and riches.” He continued in a quiet voice, “That fellow An Li, under Lord Long Yang’s persuasion, is not busy preparing to eliminate Zhao, so even though Hui Hu is totally unrelated to him, he will never let a talent like you return. As for Zhao Qian, not only will she not be able to become the Crown Princess, her fate will be extremely terrible as well.” Xiang Shaolong sighed helplessly and asked, “What should we do now?” Prince Xinling smiled slightly. “The one who strikes first will gain the upper hand, the one who strikes later will be at the mercy of others. Does Shaolong understand these words?”

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt himself sweating, finally understanding that Prince Xinling said so much to him because he is still intent on the initial plan he made with lady Pingyuan and Prince Shaoyuan, which is to assassinate

King An Li, so he is just a pawn now. He was so furious that he felt like giving himself 2 tight slaps. How stupid and naïve he was, to actually believe that the vicious Lady Pingyuan would really fall in love with him. Lady Pingyuan is indeed formidable, deliberately pretending to be unhappy with Prince Shaoyuan, and flattering him at the same time, saying that she wants a child with him so that he'll be taken in. If not for the fact that he overheard the talk she had with her son that night, he won't even know how he died. That vicious woman actually slowly made her progress, sacrificing her body to lure him in, kept on flattering him with the only aim of using his bravery, intelligence, martial arts skill and status to help them kill the King of Wei. After that they will push the blame to him and the Zhaos, so that they can retreat safely from this matter. Such a venomous ploy is indeed enough to make one's blood run cold.

In order not to arouse the other party's suspicions, he pretended to be full of vigor as he replied, "If there is anything I can do, please let me know. I am willing to go through fire and water." Prince Xinling exclaimed happily, "With these words from you, why should I worry that the plan will not work." He continued in a straight face, "I already have a plan in mind, but it's not the time to let you know yet. You can enjoy yourselves for these few days, I have a lot of beauties in my residence and you can choose anyone to serve you." Xiang Shaolong had an idea and deliberately tested the waters by saying, "With Lady Ya around, I am already satisfied." A look of anger and jealousy flashed past Prince Xinling's eyes but he immediately changed it into a warm smile, "You really know how to choose, Zhao Ya is extremely captivating, truly a fine specimen in a man's private room. Go ahead and enjoy yourself!" He added, "You'll have a good rest tonight, I'll arrange some activities for you tomorrow and I can guarantee that your trip will not be in vain."

After Xiang Shaolong left the hall, he walked towards where Zhao Ya and the rest were residing at, knowing very well that in order to gain his trust, Prince Xinling will not restrict his activities in the manor nor send anyone to spy on him. Once he stepped into the garden, he immediately thought of Mei Canniang's quiet little mountain valley. If he can spend the rest of his life in that place where there's no fights, then won't all his troubles be gone? Pride and ambition is really the downfall of many. Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt dejection and an extreme weariness about the things that has been happening around him. Especially when he thought of Lady Pingyuan, he felt that pain of being cheated and hurt. After walking past a row of old, luxuriant swaying trees, the 'Flying Clouds Chambers' which Zhao Ya and the rest are residing in came into view. Lanterns were lighted on the pillars and the eaves of the corridors and under the illumination of the lanterns, it can be seen that the corridors have double eaves, the roof was decorated with tiles and statues of beasts, extremely colorful and majestic. The paint and carvings on the main door was exquisite, the curtains on the windows were thick, with a soft and hazy light going through it.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt lost. That feeling of a strange dream filled him again. Hai! If only it really is a dream. Even when he was facing the worst situation in Zhao, he has never felt so dejected. Just like what Prince Xinling said, even if he can escape from Wei, he'll face death when he goes back as well, unless he can get his hands on 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'. But by then those troops pursuing him will certainly include Prince Xinling's men as well. This Prince Xinling is even more difficult to handle than the King of Wei, or else the Qins would not have suffered heavy losses under him time and again. If he really manages to unite the 3 states, for all you know he may really be able to take over Emperor Qin and become the world's ruler. Can

history really be changed?

Xiang Shaolong lied down on Lady Ya's couch dejectedly. Zhao Ya sat down and reached out to caress his face, asking in alarm, "Shaolong what happened to you, why do you look so bad." Xiang Shaolong carried her up the bed and buried his head in her chest and sighed, "If I have 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' with me now, I will steal all of you out of Daliang immediately and run far, far away." Zhao Ya's delicate body shook a little as she cried out, "Shaolong! Can you brace yourself? Seeing you like this pains me." She went to his ear and whispered, "An Li has got nothing to do with the order not to allow Cheng Xu and the rest into the city." Xiang Shaolong raised his head up in surprise and looked at her, "How did you know?" Lady Ya covered her mouth and smiled, "Don't ever think that we are totally helpless to defend, us Zhaos have spies all over the place. I even have my own people in Prince Xinling's residence." The look in her eyes turned icy as she continued, "This matter must be related to Prince Xinling, to deliberately isolate you and give you the feeling that there's danger everywhere so that he and his sister can control you."

Xiang Shaolong perked up immediately and he sat up, his eyes gleaming, "Have you found out where 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' is hidden." Lady Ya stared at him unbelievably and said, "If you obviously know that someone is coming to steal your things, will you let others find out so easily?" She then stood up and took out a scrolled painting from a cloth sack and unrolled it on the bed. It turns out to be the floor plan of Prince Xinling's residence. Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, "Where did you get such a good thing from?" Lady Ya smiled at him coquettishly, "Don't forget what I'm an expert in. If I can't even get this, how can I steal more important things?" Xiang Shaolong thought of

something and asked, “If there really is a ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual’, why isn’t Prince Xinling starting to manufacture the equipment according to the diagrams instead, why would he be keeping it in his residence?”

Lady Ya replied, “This involves the fight between Prince Xinling and the King of Wei. As long as Prince Xinling has not gotten his hands on the imperial throne, he will not take the secret manual out, therefore the manual must be kept in a secret location in his residence.” Xiang Shaolong sighed, “I’m afraid that even before I can find the secret manual, that conniving Prince Xinling would already have killed me.” Lady Ya suddenly extended her fair arms and covered his mouth, the soft and tender feeling shooting like electricity straight into Xiang Shaolong’s heart. She pouted, “Don’t say anything inauspicious, all right?” Xiang Shaolong sniffed in her fragrance and felt a little better. He took a close look at the map on the bed, silently committing to memory the positions of the houses in the residence. He had strict training on such matters before, so naturally he has a way of memorizing things.

Lady Ya saw that he has regained his confidence and calmness so she happily explained to him the layout of the residence. Xiang Shaolong finally recovered from his depression and asked, “Do you have a way to make contact with Wu Zhuo and the rest?” Lady Ya said with pride, “Such a simple matter, just leave it to me!” Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before continuing, “Tell Wu Zhuo to try and dig a tunnel from the camp to another location. If something happens, it may very well save lives?” Lady Ya’s expression changed, “Is the situation that bad? We are after all representatives of the King of Zhao...” Xiang Shaolong interrupted her, “If you know that the King of Wei has the intention of attacking Zhao, you won’t be saying that. We’ve really made a wrong trip this time.” As he spoke, he went



off the bed.

Lady Ya pulled him and asked, “Aren’t you accompanying me?” Xiang Shaolong replied, “Prince Xinling will force me to assassinate the King of Wei anytime, time is running short, I must find the hiding place of ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual’.” Lady Ya was greatly startled, “There are ferocious dogs guarding Wei Wuji’s residence, he’ll certainly find out if you enter.” Xiang Shaolong laughed, “You’re the expert thief, you’ll definitely have a way to deal with ferocious dogs.”

Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him and took out a small bottle from her bag and gave it to him, saying “Just a little of this powder on your body, the ferocious dogs will avoid you. But not only are there ferocious dogs, there are guards as well! Hai! Since I know that you’ll be risking your life, how can I sleep in peace tonight?” Xiang Shaolong took the bottle, hugged and gave her a kiss and said, “Just strip and wait for me on the bed without a worry! I guarantee that no one will be able to see me.”

## **Chapter 10**

### **Meeting Long Yang**

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Xiang Shaolong returned to his room and after dismissing the 4 pretty maids from their duties and ministrations, he changed into his black suit and carried his tools. He was about to slip out from the window when a maid called out, "Lady Pingyuan arrives."

Footsteps were heard and Lady Pingyuan is already at the door.

There was no time for Xiang Shaolong to remove his outfit so in his haste he just grabbed an outer robe and draped it on. By then Lady Pingyuan has already entered the room.

Lady Pingyuan closed the door, leaned against it and looked at him with a hidden smile.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting, as soon as she touches him, she'll find out immediately about the tools he had on him and with her intelligence, of course she'll know what he's trying to do.

But if he does not hug and kiss her, it would be a deviate from his normal reaction and it will arouse her suspicions.

What should he do?

He suddenly had an idea.

Xiang Shaolong sat back on the couch, patting on the bed next to him and said with an ulterior motive, "Beauty! Come! This time there will be no one who can disturb us."

Lady Pingyuan blushed and pouted, "Have you forgotten that I'm about to be married?"

Xiang Shaolong's ploy was working and he replied, "I thought you are the one who forgot, that's why you came to my room to look for me. Besides, didn't Lady ask me to give you a child? If you don't climb up my bed, how am I supposed to impregnate you?"

Lady Pingyuan replied calmly, "Will you be a little patient? My wedding will be held next spring, and we'll have all the fun we want the month before my wedding so that person will not suspect that I'm not expecting his son at all."

Xiang Shaolong expected her to say this, because it's a good excuse for her to reject him and at the same time appease him so that he will not suspect that she's plotting against him.

If he does not come up with a good plan 2 months later, he will soon be dead.

This woman is so vicious!

He has never hated a woman so much, especially when she's so mature and

seductive and her status so esteemed.

He stood up and walked towards her, until he was so close he's almost touching her bosom. He reached out, grabbed her soft shoulders and kissed her lips.

Lady Pingyuan's reaction was sizzling, her delicate body writhing in excitement but she was unable to touch Xiang Shaolong's body and find out about his secret.

After a long moment, the 2 lips parted.

The 2 of them exchanged looks, their hands held together, panting.

Lady Pingyuan could not take the flirtation any further and panted, "Shaolong! Hug me!"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and said with a smile, "Unless you are willing to go to Mount Wu with me, or else I will not touch any other part of your body except for your dainty lips."

Lady Pingyuan was baffled, "What is 'go to Mount Wu'?"

It was only then that Xiang Shaolong remembered that this wonderful term is not being used during this era yet, so he made up a story, "Mount Wu is a huge mountain near my hometown. Legend has it that when men goes there, they will have intimate fun with the fairies in the mountain, so the term go to Mount Wu means going to bed and having fun, does Lady understand now?"

Lady Pingyuan's bright eyes revealed her dilemma and Xiang Shaolong was shocked, afraid that she will change her mind so he hurriedly ask, "Why has Lady come to look for me?"

Lady Pingyuan regained her senses and pouted, "Do I need to have a reason to look for you?"

Xiang Shaolong had an idea and took the risk, "Lady better remind Prince Xinling that Lady Ya seems very confident of stealing Lu Gong's Secret Manual, I think she already knows where the manual is hidden."

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face turned icy as she said, "That slut doesn't even know she's at death's door. No matter how capable she is, she can forget about even touching the secret manual."

Xiang Shaolong queried, "Are you planning to kill her?"

Lady Pingyuan knew that she has made a slip of the tongue and with her expression remained unchanged, she explained, "That was just said in a fit of anger. Shaolong! You can't possibly have fallen in love with that slutty woman!"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I don't know if I have fallen for her, but she is truly infatuated with me, so I do not wish to see any untoward befall her."

Lady Pingyuan tried to struggle out of his grasp angrily, "Let me go!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "Lady is jealous!" He still held on to her shoulder

tightly and kissed her lips again.

Under his flirtatious and hot kisses, Lady Pingyuan softened.

Their mouths parted. Lady Pingyuan sighed helplessly again.

Xiang Shaolong knows that she is in a dilemma. On one hand she wants to cause harm to him, but on the other hand she can't help but to look for him to alleviate her loneliness of so many years. Of course he will not uncover her plot so he changed the topic, "What is Lady's future husband like?"

Lady Pingyuan turned silent before replying, "He is the great general Bai Gui, have you heard of him?"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this must be another political agreement, why would he be interested to know, so he leaned forward and kissed her neck.

Lady Pingyuan has gone without physical intimacy for so long, so how can she tolerate such excitement so she struggled and cried out, "No!"

Xiang Shaolong left her and looked at her with a smile.

Lady Pingyuan struggled out of his grasp and pushed the door open, saying, "I am leaving!"

Xiang Shaolong sent her out the door and said, "Since you're not accompanying me, I'll have to look for Lady Ya."

Lady Pingyuan saw that the 4 guards waiting outside the door seems to be listening on the conversation so she left after giving him a stare.

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be going towards Flying Clouds Chambers but once he turned the corner and saw no one around, he removed his outer clothes and hid them. Using the hook and ropes, he climbed up the roof and followed Lady Pingyuan from afar, walking either on the roof or corridors or using the big trees as camouflage.

For a person as careful as Lady Pingyuan, once she hears what he told her, she will certainly warn Prince Xinling!

There are countless rooms in the vast residence and the nearer they got to the inner courtyards, the tighter the security with high walls and watch towers. If not for the fact that Xiang Shaolong had once undergone strict training, and has seen the floor plan of the residence and has the appropriate equipment, there's no way he will be able to infiltrate the place.

There are alarm drums atop the watch towers, so one can imagine that in an emergency, once the signal is sounded, action will be swift.

At this time Lady Pingyuan, under the escort of the 4 guards, walked into a corridor.

The walls on both sides were long and tall which leads to an open area. Luckily there were a few rows of tall trees, or else there'd be no way for him to sneak in undiscovered.

Facing the entrance to the courtyard is a large building, in front of its door there are 2 rows of 18 guards and outside the house there are guards patrolling with guard dogs.

Very carefully, Xiang Shaolong used the hook and ropes and jumped onto the roof from the tall tree nearest to the building.

Lady Pingyuan went into the building alone and after passing a broad well, went to the main hall to meet Prince Xinling.

Wei Wuji was lying on the rug, his right and left arms each holding a beauty and was drinking and enjoying himself. Even when he saw his elder sister, he continued with his flirtations.

The decorations in the hall was exquisite and the colors matching, the glow from the lanterns soothing, giving one a very comfortable feeling.

Lady Pingyuan sat down opposite Prince Xinling.

Prince Xinling suddenly grabbed one of the women by her hair and pulled her head back.

The woman tilted her head back and under the luminance of the lantern, the beauty's alluring face was revealed to Xiang Shaolong who was hanging upside down outside the window. Looking at her fair neck, he can't help but gulp and at the same time felt pity for her.

Prince Xinling then went towards her fair neck and started kissing and biting



her violently, causing that beauty's body to shake and squirm and she was moaning as well. Obviously she is in pain and not pleasure.

By the time Prince Xinling's mouth left her, the tender and fair skin on her neck is full of teeth marks, and there was a faint trace of blood as well.

The other lady seems to be unperturbed, still smiling and not revealing any look of surprise at all.

Prince Xinling chortled madly and still pulling that woman's hair, asked Lady Pingyuan, "Do you think this woman is comparable to that s.lut Zhao Ya."

Lady Pingyuan sighed and said, "Wuji! You're jealous!"

Prince Xinling pushed that beauty away and shouted, "Scram."

The 2 women hurriedly ran to the back hall to hide.

Prince Xinling took a gulp from the wine bottle and wiped his mouth with his sleeve and said furiously, "That b.itch Zhao Ya, when I defeated the Qin army, she was all condescending towards me in Handan. But look at how she is treating me now, I will make her sorry."

Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows, "Where's your patience gone? Can't you even wait for a few days? Have you seen Zhao Ya?"

Prince Xinling waved his hands, "Don't talk about her. Only now do I believe your words, Zhao Ya sacrificed her body because of her adoration for Zhao

Mu. When I destroy Zhao in future, I will certainly make Zhao Mu have a taste of all the forms of torture in the world.”

Lady Pingyuan said through gritted teeth, “I can’t wait to eat his flesh and drink his blood as well. If not for him, how could Prince Pingyuan, Zhao Sheng die so early for naught?” She then told him what she heard from Xiang Shaolong about Lady Ya’s confidence in stealing the secret manual.

Prince Xinling seems unbothered and said, “Even if that slut knows that the secret manual is in the secret underground room here, security here is so tight she can forget about sneaking in. Don’t worry!”

Xiang Shaolong who was outside the window was ecstatic. Firstly he has confirmed that there indeed is a secret manual and it’s in one of the secret rooms in this building. With a special task force agent like him, it is a big possibility that he can steal the secret manual.

Lady Pingyuan commented, “It’s still better to be careful!”

Prince Xinling replied, “I have already increased security. Even if she can get the manual, she can forget about taking it out of the residence.”

Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before asking, “How are relations between you and An Li now?”

A flash of anger went past Prince Xinling’s eyes as he said coldly, “That old idiot is belittling me more and more. He only knows how to place his trust on petty people like Lord Longyang, Lou Wu, Su Song, Guan Pi etc. If I allow him

to have his unruly way, our Great Wei will be destroyed sooner or later.”

Lady Pingyuan asked, “When are you going to arrange for Xiang Shaolong to see An Li?”

Prince Xinling replied, “Now we’re using the excuse that Zhao Qian is not used to the conditions here so she can’t enter the palace to meet An Li yet so that we can have more time to prepare. But this matter cannot be delayed. I’ve decided that on the 1st of the next month, which is 3 days later, we’ll let Xiang Shaolong officially send Zhao Qian into the palace. An Li will certainly set a feast to welcome time and that will be the time to take action.” He paused and continued, “You better tie Xiang Shaolong tightly with love so that he will risk his life for us without a doubt.”

Lady Pingyuan sighed sadly, “You’d better find another way to retain him, I’m a little afraid to see him.”

Prince Xinling was startled, “You can’t possibly have fallen for him?”

Lady Pingyuan stood up and sighed again, shaking her head, “The grander picture is of more importance, what is a personal loss? It’s just that I’m afraid that once I have a sexual relation with him and have his child, that’ll be even worse.” She turned around to leave as she finished her words.

Xiang Shaolong was at a loss. He was stunned for a moment, and waited until after Prince Xinling went into the inner hall before he sneaked into the main hall and did a quick check. He only left secretly when he has made sure that the secret underground room is not beneath this hall.

Xiang Shaolong burrowed beneath the blanket, holding Lady Ya's burning body, so comfortable that he was moaning.

Ever since he came to Daliang, he has this horrible feeling that he's lost in an angry sea. It's only when he's hugging this beauty can he feel a short moment of relaxation and safety. It doesn't matter if this feeling is so feeble or fake, it's still enough to make one intoxicated enough to treasure it.

It's the first time he felt no barriers or distance between him and Zhao Ya.

The two of them used all their might to hug each other, enjoying the brief pleasure during this difficult time.

Lady Ya kissed his ears as she asked, "Why don't you go and take a look at Third Princess?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "I'm afraid I won't be able to hold myself back with her and when I return to Zhao later, Zhao Mu will surely use this to trap me."

Lady Ya kissed him approvingly and said, "It's rare that you're so alert, Xiang Lang! Zhao Ya loves you."

Xiang Shaolong replied sincerely, "I love you too!" He then told her in detail what he has overheard.

Zhao Ya said, "The underground room must be beneath Prince Xinling's bedroom. Xiang Lang is so capable to be able to infiltrate into such a highly guarded place. This must be out of that conniving thief's expectations."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "It may not be difficult to steal the secret manual, but the difficult part is getting you 12 weak and dainty beauties out of Daliang."

Zhao Ya replied, "All residences belonging to royalty and officials will certainly have a secret passageway for escape. If we can find this passageway, there's the possibility of escaping from the mansion. But even if we can get out, we won't be able to slip out of the city."

Xiang Shaolong was inspired by her words and sat up. He thought that if there is a passageway, it will certainly be behind Prince Xinling's residence, because he has checked the floor in the main hall and did not find anything.

Lady Ya sat up with him and laid in his arms, asking, "Shaolong! What have you thought of?"

Xiang Shaolong explained, "If there is a secret passageway, it must be connected with the secret room which holds Lu Gong's Secret Manual. That is only reasonable. Also, there will be more than one entrance to this passageway, so as long as we can find just one of the entrances, we will be able to move freely in here."

Lady Ya smiled coquettishly, "Leave this to me, I guarantee that I will not disappoint."

Xiang Shaolong hugged her tightly and laughed, "Zhao Ya is so obedient, how shall I thank you?"

Zhao Ya was about to reply when someone knocked on the door, followed by Zhao Qian's sad voice calling out, "Can Qian'er come in?"

When Xiang Shaolong woke up, the bed was filled with a fragrant smell.

Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian were on either side of him, hugging him tightly.

With Zhao Qian around last night, he did not have fun with Lady Ya and naturally he dared not touch Zhao Qian as well. But that kind of intoxicating feeling is alluring enough as well.

After having a good sleep, all the dejection he felt yesterday was swept away.

He has let go of everything else and did not step out of Flying Clouds Chamber the whole morning, spending the time chatting happily with the 2 ladies and the maids.

At noon, Prince Xinling sent someone to ask for him.

At the outer hall, Prince Xinling was sitting with 3 other people, having tea. On seeing his arrival, he immediately introduced them and they turned out to be famous mercenary in his residence.

One of them who was large built and ugly was Zhu Hai. When Prince Xinling stole the military token to defeat Qin years ago, it was all thanks to him who hid a 40jin hammer and used it to kill the General Jin Bi who was leading the military. He is one of the famed fiercest general in the world.

The other two are Tan Bang and Yue Xing. The former was heavily bearded and looked like a Confucian scholar while the latter was short and stout, with a glance one can tell that he's a highly skilled pugilist.

Prince Xinling smiled, "It's the first time Shaolong has been here, let me bring you around and after lunch we can meet the most talented and beautiful lady in Daliang and let's see if you can manage to impress her."

Xiang Shaolong immediately thought of the 'Shi Shaonu' whom Lady Ya once mentioned and he was immediately invigorated and followed them out of the house.

The 5 of them went separately in 2 horse carriages and under the protection of 20 odd guards, toured Daliang.

The carriage went past the route they took when they arrived, which passed the imperial palace.

The buildings were grouped magnificently together with carvings of phoenixes and dragons, with lush woods surrounding them. But when Xiang Shaolong thought of when these pretty buildings will soon become unrecognizable ruins, he felt a great pity.

Along the walls of the palace, there were river ways intercrossed with roads and bridge, looking extremely picturesque.

After leaving the palace area, they turned into a bustling street linking the north and south.

Strangely, there's a path right in the middle of the large street, which is extremely flat with locust trees planted thickly on both sides, and next to them were wide drains. The pedestrian walkway is on the outer area of the drains.

Prince Xinling explained, "This is an official pathway reserved only for the use of his Majesty and officials with the ranks of dukes and above, commoners are not allowed to step on it."

As he spoke, the carriage had already turned into the official pathway.

At the southern end of the official path was tightly knitted residential and commercial areas, the layout was organized although chaotic in a way as well. Ladies, gentlemen and merchants were moving around the crowd with people talking and bumping into one another, making the place look extremely exciting and prosperous.

They had lunch at the largest restaurant in this area, Dan Yang Lou. This restaurant has its front facing the main street and its back against a small river and was very exquisite.

They took up a large private room near the river on the 2nd level and when they've had some drinks, that Tan Bang became very chatty, revealing his scholarly nature. No wonder Prince Xinling would invite him along to accompany them.

Although Zhu Hai and Yue Xing were more into martial arts, they too listened intently.



It's the first time Xiang Shaolong has heard such an in-depth and witty analysis of current affairs and was very much intrigued.

Right then Prince Xinling asked, "Amongst the many schools of thought, which school and which person is the best?"

Tan Bang smiled and took his time to reply, "Although it's said that rivers all flow in different ways, but in today's time they have all merged. From what I see, amongst the modern people now, Zou Yan and Xun Qing from Qi and Master Fei from Han have all the accomplishments of learned men before our time, and can also do more than what has been done by our forefathers. Their teachings will certainly be the way to go for future ideals on managing a state."

Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows who Xun Zi and Han Fei is, but he does not know the background of Zou Yan at all and asked, "Who is Zou Yan?"

Everyone looked at him in surprise.

Prince Xinling commented, "I did not know that Shaolong don't even know who this famous and rare person is." He continued with a mysterious smile, "Let me introduce you later."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, could it be that this Zou Yan is living in that Shi Cainu's house, or else how could he see him so easily?

Tan Bang lowered his voice, "Mister Zou may be one of the rare talents in the world now, but he is famous now because the situation made him so."

Everyone hurriedly asked him for the reason.

Tan Bang sighed and revealed a sad expression, “Ever since the weakening of the Zhous, the world has been without a leader and the various states fighting amongst themselves. All the suffering commoners were praying for the appearance of the true ruler so that all these wars can be stopped. Mister Zou’s teachings of the 5 morals said, listen to the words and obey the orders. Everyone hopes that he can give some hint so that they will know who will be the master of the new era.”

A gleam flashed in Prince Xinling’s eyes, because he has long regarded himself as the savior in these difficult times, and he is working hard towards this goal.

Xiang Shaolong used to be so sure that the ruler of the new era would be Emperor Qin, but after knowing the true situation here, he was confused again.

Tan Bang lowered his voice, “From what I see, the new ruler will certainly be Prince.”

Prince Xinling coughed dryly to cover the excitement he felt and said, “That Zou Yan whom Mister Tan was referring to may be famous, but he came from Jixia that comes out with wild theories. From what I see he’s just someone who speaks empty.”

Tan Bang replied with a straight face, “No, this person is very different from those madmen at Jixia. He is a defender of Confucius’s teachings and does

not look highly upon the words of Mohism. If Prince has some free time, you should read his works in detail.”

Prince Xinling pretended to appear very magnanimous and replied, “Thank you for your pointers.”

Tan Bang was about to talk about Han Fei when footsteps could be heard outside the door and the soldier who was guarding outside the door came in and reported, “Lord Longyang requests for an audience!”

Prince Xinling and Xiang Shaolong were extremely surprised, they did not expect Lord Longyang would be so bold to actually come looking for them.

Those who come are without good intentions.

Prince Xinling sat proudly, having no intention of rising to greet him at all and said loudly, “If Lord Longyang has no intention to drink, than it’s best that you do not come in.” He is obviously not giving Lord Longyang any face with these words, obviously their relation is so strained that they are openly at war.

Zhu Hai’s gaze turned icy as he asked, “Does Prince wants me to guard the door for you.”

Prince Xinling shook his head with a smile.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly impressed. Prince Xinling’s expression can remain totally unchanged even if Mount Tai was collapsing in front of him,

and this is precisely the secret to his success. At the same time he felt a little anticipation as well, wanting to find out exactly how ‘charming’ is this Lord Longyang whose fame amongst men has extended through history.

A gentle and melodious voice that could have belonged to either a man or a woman answered from outside the door, “Why is Prince Xinling so upset, have I offended you in any way? Then all the more Longyang has to come in and offer my apologies.”

Xiang Shaolong felt his hair stand on hearing the voice. He did not expect that just Lord Longyang’s voice is already so intolerable.

Prince Xinling chortled, “No need for apologies!” He added with a shout, “Aren’t you letting our esteemed guest in!”

The door opened.

5 men came in.

Xiang Shaolong stared at Lord Longyang who was at the head of the line, stunned for a moment.

His pretty looks is unparalleled, his skin fairer and softer than a woman, his long eyes full of life and he walked daintily, like a little grass bending from the gentle breeze. If he were to dress up as a woman, he will definitely be an unrivalled beauty.

He was at least half a head shorter than Xiang Shaolong, but his build was

proportionate, his arms and limbs slender.

The warrior outfit he wore was exquisite, with a dark green as the base embroidered with pretty silk flowers, very eye catching.

The hat he wore was even better, made in the shape of a romantic and exaggerated tiger's face, and behind the hat there's even a tiger's tail.

Although Xiang Shaolong has no interest in men, he has to admit that Lord Longyang is indeed very 'pretty'.

If not for the long sword he hung on his waist, Xiang Shaolong will never remember that Prince Xinling once told him that he is one of Wei's 3 greatest swordsmen.

You will never be on your guard against such a dainty and weak looking man.

If one were to only compare beauty, Lian Jin would not be able to catch up with him even if he's on a horse.

As for the other four, with one look it's obvious that they are top swordsmen, especially the short and stout man behind Lord Longyang on the right. His eyes were gleaming and he has an aura of death. He looks like one who loves a fight, and others will not dare to belittle him.

Lord Longyang walked daintily to the table and sat down gently. He threw a flirtatious look at Prince Xinling first before his glittering eyes traveled past the others seated around the table, landing at last on Xiang Shaolong's face.

He stared at him for a moment before ‘giggling’, “Commander Xiang, I’ve missed you so badly!”

Xiang Shaolong felt himself go numb from his stare and thought to himself that this person is so coquettish that he must have long disregarded himself as a man. The thought grossed him out so much that for a moment he does not know how to handle him and can only smile stiffly, “I do not have any capabilities at all, so how could I have caused Lord Longyang to miss me so much?”

Prince Xinling personally filled Lord Longyang’s winecup and said with a smile, “I’d like to hear about it as well.”

Lord Longyang ‘smiled daintily’ and replied, “Commander Xiang was able to kill Lian Jin, a good fighter from Wei, and execute the horrible horse thief Hui Hu, obviously you really have the talent, so how can I not like you?”

Zhu Hai and the rest were furrowing their brows as they heard the conversation but there’s nothing they can do to him.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled, this person was ‘smiling coquettishly’, and the eyes looking at him were ‘full of feelings’, not a trace of hatred towards him was revealed. This ‘smiling with a dagger hidden’ is enough to make one’s heart run cold.

Prince Xinling chortled, “Come! Let us drink a toast to Lord Longyang’s affection.” He swept his eyes across and his stern look landed on the 4 swordsmen standing behind Lord Longyang and cried out, “Offer the wine!”

Naturally there will be someone who will offer wine to those 4.

Everyone there had their own secret intentions, but all drank the toast.

Except for Lord Longyang who did not move. He waited until everyone has drunk the wine before pouring it on the ground next to him, saying shyly, "Let's offer this wine to the Earth Deity, to celebrate the number one swordsman from Zhao stepping on our Great Wei's soil."

Even with Prince Xinling's control, his composure changed slightly as he uttered coldly, "I've specially arranged a lot of programs for Shaolong today, if Lord Longyang has no other matters, please forgive us as we will be leaving immediately."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cheering. In truth he was starting to get irritated with Lord Longyang effeminate way of talking.

At the same time he was thinking to himself, if this Lord's swordplay is as effeminate and willowy as him, it will be quite difficult to deal with. If during the duel he's as irritated as he's feeling now which makes him rash and anxious, he might lose because of it.

Lord Longyang laughed, his 'pretty eyes' looking at Xiang Shaolong joyously as he said effeminately, "I came here today is to see how heroic and brave Commander Xiang is. It's such a small request, I'm sure Master Wuji will not reject me!"

Prince Xinling and Xiang Shaolong exchanged looks, extremely annoyed but

they really found it difficult to reject.

A gleam came over Xiang Shaolong's eyes, and looking at this man famed for his beauty, he laughed and asked, "I wonder if Lord Longyang is going to test me personally or will you let your men do it?"

Prince Xinling interrupted, "Weapons do not have eyes. If Lord Longyang is fighting personally, then forgive me for not agreeing to this."

Lord Longyang 'giggled', "Since Master is so protective of me, I will let Sha Xuan take on Commander Xiang!"

Prince Xinling and the rest revealed a look of alarm and they looked towards the short and stout man whom Xiang Shaolong was scrutinizing earlier. This made Xiang Shaolong affirm his guess that this person must be a ferocious fighter who has won many duels.

That Sha Xuan took a step forward and said loudly, "Sha Xuan is willing to take some pointers from Commander Xiang's excellent swordplay!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that this duel is unavoidable, besides this also involves the reputation of Zhao. So he respectfully sought Prince Xinling's permission, asking, "Will Prince allow Shaolong to accept the duel!"

Prince Xinling was very confident about him, and at the same time he wanted to see for himself his swordplay as well, so he replied with a smile, "Sha Xuan is our Majesty's skilled fighter, Shaolong must be careful." He continued loudly, "This is purely an exchange of pointers, so I hope both of you will



control your attacks.” He then shouted, “Men! Clear a space for a duel in the hall here!”

He had just spoken his words when the sounds of tables and chairs being moved could be heard outside the room.

Lord Longyang smiled and stood up gently.

Xiang Shaolong was stunned as well, no wonder the King of Wei is so besotted with this person. All his movements are fluid, beautiful, his expressions alluring. Once you are with him for some time, it’s difficult not to treat him as a woman.

Lord Longyang bowed slightly towards Xiang Shaolong and laughed daintily, “I will wait outside for Commander Xiang.”

And he walked out of the room with his men, his hips swaying.

Prince Xinling looked at his disappearing back view, his eyes shone and he lowered his voice and said icily, “Kill Sha Xuan for me!”

## Chapter 11

### Little House by the Lake

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After the tables and things were moved to the corners, there was a large empty space.

All the guests were asked to leave the upper level, leaving only men from both sides.

Sha Xuan and Xiang Shaolong stood facing each other in the middle of the hall. The sunlight streamed in from a large window at the side, illuminating the ground near the window in a golden glow.

Lord Longyang was very confident in his man, and was looking at Xiang Shaolong with a coquettish smile. However his subordinates were looking at Xiang Shaolong as if they did not think highly of him.

Sha Xuan's swordplay is very famous in Daliang, and he is the leader of the 8 senior imperial guards belonging to King An Li, one of the most feared characters in Daliang.

Prince Xinling may look calm and composed on the surface, but he is secretly feeling nervous. If Xiang Shaolong were to unfortunately perish in the duel, then his plan to assassinate King An Li would have gone down the drain. But if he can kill the other party, there will be one less obstacle when assassinating the King of Wei.

“Clang!”

Sha Xuan removed his sword from the scabbard, and for a moment a cold ray was emitted. He seemed to have changed into another person, holding on to his sword heroically and retreated 3 steps. His retreat reverberated through the wooden floor, the sound of his steps loud.

Although he retreated, his impressive aura was increasing instead of decreasing and the spectators at the side all felt stifled and was shocked.

Xiang Shaolong could feel his opponent's fierce and vicious aura, so he recollected his thoughts and entered into Mozi Swordplay's world of quiet defense, and did not look into his opponent's sharp and piercing eyes.

Men on both sides saw that Xiang Shaolong was unmoving despite being oppressed by his opponent's fierce aura. He stood straight, his composure calm, and they were all surprised. They did not know that it is the essence of Mozi swordplay to counter movement with calmness.

Sha Xuan felt displeased, because in the past when he defeated his enemies, he relied on his special fierce aura to make his opponent frightened before attacking swiftly and strongly so that his opponent will shed blood within 5 steps. However, he did not expect that this person in front of him is not at all affected by his aura and this made him lose his bearings instead. But by now there's no room for retreat, so he roared and attacked with his sword.

Lord Longyang and the men immediately cheered to boost his morale.

This sword attack was as swift as lightning, aiming straight towards Xiang Shaolong's forehead, filled with a strong force that cannot be retracted.

Xiang Shaolong's Flying Rainbow is still in his scabbard, as if he has no intention of retaliating at all. It was only until the sword was almost upon his head and Prince Xinling and the rest were beginning to worry for him that his body moved suddenly and diagonally across and came in front of the large window which sunlight streamed in. He was still looking at his opponent coolly, his eyes filled with unparalleled and strong determination.

He came from a background of strict and elite military training, and is adept at using the environment to bring out the best in his fighting ability. Since he accepted the challenge, he is determined to get rid of his opponent in the shortest time possible, firstly to curb some of Lord Longyang's air, and secondly to make Prince Xinling think even more highly of himself.

He is extremely experience in combat and very good at eyeing others out. With a look at Sha Xuan's stance, he knows that this person has very strong arms and specializes in vicious and dangerous attacks. That's why he avoided his sword attack to throw the opponent off guard.

Sha Xuan roared angrily, and followed his sword again to make another attack.

Xiang Shaolong laughed long and loud, Flying Rainbow came out of the scabbard like lightning and he held the treasured sword diagonally away from his body at a 45-degree angle on the side. It immediately captured the afternoon sunlight that was glaring in from the window and reflected the ray

of sunlight into Sha Xuan's round and fearsome eyes.

Never in his dreams did Sha Xuan imagine that there would be a kind of swordplay against an opponent, which makes use of sunlight in a room. He felt a strong glare in front of him and for a moment he could not see anything at all.

How can Xiang Shaolong let such a rare opportunity go so he avoided his opponent's sword and his sword slashed diagonally, like the wind. For a moment, blood poured and a scream was heard. The fresh blood pouring from the side of Sha Xuan's neck gradually ebbed as he fell to the ground.

His sword had sliced his opponent's throat, and everyone knows that there's no way Sha Xuan will survive.

Men on both sides could feel cold sweat coming out from their pores as they witnessed the scene. Who would have imagined that with Sha Xuan's swordplay, he could not even fend against his opponent's one stroke.

Xiang Shaolong returned his sword into the scabbard and smiled calmly at Lord Longyang, "Brother Sha's swordplay is too good, I would have liked to hold my attacks back but was unable to, please forgive me."

Inside the horse carriage, Prince Xinling said happily, "Xiang Shaolong has helped me vent my frustration, it feels so good!"

Xiang Shaolong remembered Lord Longyang's pretense of calm as he was leaving and asked with a smile, "I wonder if King An Li will be displeased that I

killed his guard.”

Prince Xinling gave a cold snort, “That Sha Xuan, on the pretext of exchanging pointers, killed 5 of my very good swordsmen. Now that you’ve killed him today, what else can An Li say about that.”

By then the carriage has turned into a small road with trees growing densely around it and in front there’s a tranquil and exquisite looking house and courtyard.

Prince Xinling is in extremely high spirits, maybe because there’s now a chance of assassinating the King of Wei. He told him warmly, “We’re now going to this place that all men in Daliang wishes to go, ‘Little House by the Lake’. The scenery here is breathtaking but the main reason is it’s mistress Miss Ji Yanran not only has the beauty to make a country fall, but her talents astound the world as well. Together with Widow Qing from the state of Qin, they are know as the era’s finest pair.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing bitterly. If it was the past, he will certainly be ecstatic to have the chance to meet such a famous beauty, but now his own life is in danger, how can he find the mood to flirt. Even if the other party was willing, he’ll have to think of a way to make her give up so that she will not have to worry about his future.

Once he thought about that, he really felt like a tiger who has fallen on bad times.

Prince Xinling has no idea that he is already aware of his evil plot and thought

that Xiang Shaolong was just too excited to talk, so he embellished the story, “Miss Yanran loves to chat about scholarly and martial pursuits with the various learned men who came from afar...”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, “Martial pursuits?”

Prince Xinling was shocked, “I didn’t expect you not to know this. Miss Yanran is ranked above Lord Longyang amongst Wei’s greatest swordsmen, at number 2. Hai! Such a beauty, how can any average man be compatible with her? That’s why she is still unmarried now. Whoever wins her heart, will certainly gain fame in the world immediately and become the envy of all men around.”

He sighed again, “Talking about looks and skills, Shaolong has the qualities to be selected, but you might not be able to pass the scholarly test.”

As they spoke, the carriage has entered the courtyard.

Under the shade of the trees, a small lake appeared in front of them. In the middle of the lake was a small island with a few exquisite rooms built on it, a long bridge linking the island to the land. It looks like a place fit for a deity to live in.

No matter how dejected Xiang Shaolong was, he was invigorated on seeing it. To think that there would be such a scenic place in Daliang. Looking at the abode one can know the person who resides in it, so by this deduction, this pretty mistress must certainly be out of the ordinary.

The little island on the pretty lake was shaped like a crescent moon, with a fake waterfall, looking like a painted scroll. Between the rooms there were strange flowers and grass, gentle waves lapping and long corridors meandering and linking them, exquisite with an ancient beauty. One can imagine that if one can take a stroll there, it will certainly be a very exhilarated feeling and one will be reluctant to leave.

The carriages went up the long bridge, as if they're now traveling into a beautiful painting, the breeze blowing past the water, the trees fighting for beauty. The colors of the pavilions and rooms stood in contrast with the lake and the mountains, the little bridges and streams partially hidden by the green leaves and trees.

After passing through a bamboo pathway and 2 small pavilions, the carriages stopped in at an open space in front of a building. There were already 3 horse carriages parked there, obviously they are not the only visitors.

Xiang Shaolong followed the rest down the carriage and a pretty maid came out from the building and paid her respect to Prince Xinling, saying "Miss is having an afternoon nap now, would Prince Xinling and the rest of the guests please wait a moment in the hall."

Prince Xinling doesn't seem in the least offended and happily led Xiang Shaolong into the hall beneath the building.

Xiang Shaolong was laughing bitterly to himself secretly again. Looking at what the maid is like, he can imagine what the mistress will be like. To think



that there is such a great beauty with character, but he does not have the mood or bravery to hunt. Fate does make fun of men.

End of Book 3